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The Labor Philosophy of Michael J. Quill

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The Labor Philosophy of

Michael J. Quill

By

Joseph Augustine Kelly S.J.

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Institute
of Industrial Relations of Loyola University
in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of
Industrial Relations.

November

1967

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Joseph A. Kelly has been read and approved by two members of the faculty of the Institute of Industrial Relations, Loyola University, Chicago, Illinois.

The final copies have been examined by the Director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Industrial Relations.

Feb. 1, 1968

Date

Julius Perles

Signature of Director

LIFE

Joseph Augustine Kelly was born in Tullamore, County Offaly, Ireland, May 27, 1931.

He was graduated from Saint Columba's Classical School in Tullamore in June 1947, and from University College Dublin in October 1954 with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. In 1957 he took out his Licentiate in Philosophy at Saint Stanislaus College, Tullamore, and in 1960 his Higher Diploma in Education at University College Dublin.

Having studied in Cornell University in the Fall Semester of 1965, he continued his graduate studies in the field of Industrial Relations in Loyola University, enrolling there in Spring 1966. He will complete his requirements by February 1968.

SUMMARY

Michael Quill was an honest dedicated trade-union leader, who, despite his flamboyance, achieved proportionately more for his workers than did many other labor leaders of his time. His philosophy was essentially pragmatic and opportunistic, colored slightly by the Socialist influences of his early trade-union days. Coupled with this pragmatism was a belief in uplift trade-unionism, a genuine desire to increase the dignity of his members by bettering their wages, hours, and working conditions.

He was a man of keen political acumen, whose foresight in the politics of trade unionism has not been fully appreciated. He opposed the AFL-CIO merger in 1955, and many now see the wisdom of his objections. This political adroitness enabled him to use the Communists to build up his union, while simultaneously disagreeing with their ideology. In 1948, he broke completely with them. He strongly advocated the formation of a National Labor Party because he felt that labor was becoming excessively tied to the Democratic Party and was losing its power.

The means he used to achieve his ends reflect his personality, colorful, inconsistent, and theatrical. These qualities served both to endear friends, and further alienate enemies. His union came before public convenience and his continual strike threats did not help the public image of labor. He was the sort of leader who forced one to take sides, and this in itself is a sign of greatness. A rabid believer in the old CIO, his influence on American labor diminished as this body merged with the AFL both on a national and state level.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER

I	INTRODUCTION	Page
	Purpose -- Profile -- Method	1
II	QUILL'S VIEWS ON LABOR MOVEMENT OBJECTIVES	
	National Objectives of the American Labor Movement	9
	International Objectives of the American Labor Movement	12
	Objectives of the TWU	14
III	QUILL'S VIEWS ON THE MEANS NECESSARY TO OBTAIN LABOR'S OBJECTIVES	
	<u>A. Economic Means</u>	
	1. Organization of Workers	19
	2. Collective Bargaining	33
	3. Use of Economic Force	40
	<u>B. Political Means</u>	
	1. Relationship to Political Parties	44
	2. Political Education of Members	53
	3. Labor Legislation	57
IV	QUILL'S VIEWS ON SIGNIFICANT AREAS AFFECTING THE LABOR MOVEMENT	
	1. Economic System	61
	2. Labor-Management Relations	68
	3. Technological Change	71
	4. Civil Rights	75
V	CONCLUSION	
	Critical review of Quill's labor philosophy	78
	Author's conclusion	90

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION - PURPOSE

PROFILE - METHOD

PURPOSE

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the labor philosophy of the late Michael J. Quill, founder and President of the International Transport Workers Union. It is the author's intention to explore the significant opinions and beliefs of Mr. Quill, to examine the various factors which influenced his thinking. Here particular emphasis will be placed on economic, political and social factors. Mr. Quill's concepts concerning the objectives of trade unions will be considered, as will his understanding of the proper means to achieve those objectives. In the entire study some effort will be made to find some sort of consistent pattern underlying many contradictory statements, as Mr. Quill was a voluble man. A full rounding out of his labor philosophy requires an examination of those areas of interest of critical importance to the trade union movement.

Many reasons may be advanced indicating why Mr. Quill may be considered a worthy subject of such a study. American labor has rarely produced a more colorful leader than Mr. Quill. Many of his statements over the years have bemused, antagonized, or arrogantly annoyed both management and the public and sometimes large segments of organized labor as well. To isolate from his many confusing and ambiguous statements some threads of consistency is a hazardous task, because what Mr. Quill said and what Mr. Quill meant might be two very different things. This in itself is a challenge. The philosophy reflects the man, and so it is characterized with a certain flamboyance, a Khrushchev-like quality of inconsistent histrionics.

"Quill is not a man who can be explained in a sentence or a paragraph. His is a complex personality; some of his union members would follow him to the death; while others cordially detest him and do not hesitate to say so. Outside his union there are labor leaders, especially in high-ranking AFL-CIO circles, who consider him a knave

and a mountebank. Many who know him well consider him a unionist so dedicated to the TWU that they fear it will fall apart because of internal factional discord when he goes. He is a man of keen political savvy, and he never hesitates to use it. He is a slogan-manufacturer and phrase maker of great ability, a platform speaker of such talent that he has become probably the city's most successful stump orator."¹

Apart, however, from the natural interest in the man himself, his position as a labor leader, particularly in New York City was of such importance that a study of it was merited. The Transport Workers Union controls what is an essential service to the City of New York - public transportation, including both surfact and rapid transit.² Owing to the geographically vast and physically complex structure of New York City, its dependence on public transportation is absolute. Narrow streets, prolonged delays in traffic, lack of adequate parking facilities, are driving more and more people to use the subways. Hence a strike there would paralyze the city. But in view of the economic importance of New York in relation to the rest of the United States, the effects of a transportation strike there would be felt beyond the boundaries of the city. The power to call such a strike rested in the hands of Michael Quill.

Again a man who could build a union under the extremely adverse conditions existing in New York is a worthy subject of study. To achieve what Quill achieved required a certain canny type of brilliance and a fair share of fervor and devotion. An examination of the Transport Workers Union, its philosophy, policies and objectives should in turn throw some light on the philosophy and objectives of its founder.

Finally, it was the author's good fortune to have been closely associated with Mr. Quill during the last seven months of his life. From this association came some dim awareness of Mr. Quill's ultimate objectives

¹Theodore W. Kheel and J. K. Turcott, Arbitration and Transit Peace [Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall 1960] pg. 33

² Surface transit refers to single carriage vehicles and would therefore include the bus lines. Rapid transit, on the other hand refers to a multi-carriage vehicle and is used in this study to refer to the subway trains.

and views both about labor in general, and the objectives of the Transport Workers Union in particular. During those last seven months, Mr. Quill did, in fact, call his first transit strike in New York and working closely with him during that period, the author was enabled to arrive at some conclusions concerning Mr. Quill's views on the use of the strike weapon, his collective bargaining philosophy and tactics, and his qualities as a labor leader in holding together a rather turbulent rank and file.

PERSONAL PROFILE

Michael J. Quill was born in the little village of Kilgarvan, County Kerry, Ireland, on September 18, 1905. He was the second youngest of eight children most of whom were involved in some way or other with Ireland's fight for freedom. Quill was a farmer's son, and his interests lay not so much with the problem of industry, but with the overthrow of the British Government and the right to Irish political independence. It is necessary here to dwell on this portion of Quill's life as it is the author's belief that these early environmental factors had a profound influence on his subsequent activity here in America. Quill and many of the first organizers of the Transport Workers Union [hereinafter TWU] were men who had fought the British in Ireland as members of the Irish Republican Army. With his father jailed twice, and his brothers and sisters all in the movement, the remote Quill farmhouse became a center of subversive activity. Quill was brought up in an atmosphere of secrecy and intrigue, of whispered meetings and guerilla tactics. Like the other rebels of the time, he had been ardently associated with all the ideals of the leaders of Ireland's fight for freedom. One of the most important of those leaders was James Connolly, co-founder of the Irish Transport and General Worker's Union. During the Irish Rebellion of 1916, the union offices in Dublin were blasted to the ground, and Connolly wounded and on a stretcher, was taken out and executed, becoming a legend in later-day Irish unionism. All this is important, because Connolly, while not only being a patriot,

was also a strong advocate of a type of unionism which Quill interpreted as industrial unionism. Quill lived through this era and we shall see later the full effect of its impact on him.

On March 17th, 1926 Quill arrived in America, and started work on a pick and shovel gang at the 168th street station of the Independent Subway, which was then under construction. Having passed through a series of different jobs he wound up a ticket taker for the Interborough Rapid Transit [hereinafter IRT]. Surveying the long hours and the poor conditions of the job and of transit employees Quill began to think of forming a union. History should have discouraged him as previous efforts had met with concerted opposition. After a few secret meetings Quill and Douglas McMahon³ were working as full time organizers.

From the very beginning the Communist influence was present, as those who selected Quill for the organizing job were themselves agents of the Party. Through the skillful propaganda of these men coupled with Quill's enthusiasm, the new union began to grow. In 1936 it received recognition through the International Association of Machinists as Lodge 1547. However the new union found it difficult to breathe in the crafty air of the American Federation of Labor. The growing power of the CIO, the emphasis on industrial unionism, on organizing the unskilled appealed strongly to TWU's aspirations and so

"... on May 7th, 1937, affiliation with the Committee for Industrial Organization took place. On May 10th, an international CIO charter was granted, and on October 5th the Transport Workers Union CIO was formed in constitutional convention. The original and strongest group emerged later as Greater New York Local 100".⁴

³McMahon was later to be expelled from the union after the 1948 Convention. Then an avowed Communist he went to work for the Furniture Workers in New York. After many years, he too became disillusioned with Communism, and like Quill made a complete break with it. Shortly after this, he was approached by Quill who invited him back to the union. McMahon is today International Secretary-Treasurer of the TWU

⁴James J. McGinley, S.J., Labor Relations in the New York Rapid Transit Systems 1904-44; New York: Columbia University; King's Crown Press 1949, pg. 286.

Immediately, the TWU set about organizing everything on wheels, and many A. F. of L. unions started to lose members. Historic events and personalities played into the union's hands. John L. Lewis encouraged them morally and financially. The legislation so benevolent to labor in the thirties also assisted the organizational development and the union grew in strength, spreading throughout the country. Locals were established in Akron, Philadelphia, Omaha, Flint, Columbus and San Francisco. Apart from a favorable Lewis and legislation, much of this expansion must be attributed to the excellent propaganda work of the Communists in the union. To what extent Quill believed fully in the principles of Communism will be discussed later. Suffice it to say here that he was glad to avail of their services to build up his union.

Apart from the subways, Quill started to extend his union's scope. In 1942 he started the drive to organize the airline workers, and in 1945 he signed the first union contract with Pan American World Airways. The interest in airlines led to the formation of the Air Transport Division of TWU, which covered every maintenance and flight classification with the exception of pilots and engineers. In New York contracts were being signed with the private bus companies as well as with the subway systems. In 1954 the CIO Railroad Organizing Committee, comprising some 30,000 members affiliated with the TWU. Prior to this Quill had successfully organized the maintenance and cafeteria workers in Columbia University. Subsequently he moved into Utilities organizing the workers in the Brooklyn Union Gas Company. One of the more recent groups to be affiliated was composed of certain categories of missile workers of Cape Kennedy. They were incorporated into the Air Transport Division as a sub-division of American Airlines. In brief these constitute the industries which Quill organized through the TWU.

However, in view of Quill's dynamism, it was unlikely that he would confine his activities to the scope of the TWU alone. He was for many years vice-president of the New York City CIO council, and became president in 1949, a position he held until 1959, when the AFL and CIO labor bodies

were merged. He was a member of the National Board of CIO from 1937 to 1950, when he was elected vice-president of the national body, a post which he held until the merger in 1955.

Few men become important labor leaders without some talent for politics. Quill saw early on the extent to which unionism was linked with local politics. In 1937 he was elected to the City Council of New York as an Independent Labor candidate. Much will be said later on about Quill's attitude to politics. His views fluctuated, and though elected in 1945 on the platform of the American Labor Party, he was later to condemn it as ineffective. He retired from political office in 1949, and within his union he gradually adopted the position of advocating a National Labor Party.

Outside the country Quill was establishing contacts that were to have some bearing on his views. In 1949 he took part in the formation of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in London as a delegate of the CIO, and attended subsequent ICFTU Congresses in that capacity in Milan [1951]; Berlin [1952]; Stockholm [1953]; and Vienna [1955]. He was elected to the General Executive Board of the International Transport Federation in 1954 at its London Congress, and was re-elected in 1955, at the Vienna Congress.

Much of Quill's prominence was based not only on his personality, but on his bargaining tactics. His strikes, his repeated threat to strike, his cliff-hanging bargaining all created an image, and at the same time took their toll of Quill's strength. On January 1, 1966, Quill called his first official subway strike in New York. The pressure of the complicated negotiations, the strongly antipathetic public opinion, the overall wear and tear proved too much. Shortly after his arrest for tearing up the anti-strike injunction, he suffered a heart attack. From this he made a short-lived recovery, and he died of a second heart attack on January 28, 1966.

METHOD

This thesis is part of a joint research project undertaken by graduate students of the Institute of Industrial Relations of Loyola University, Chicago. The project's function is to outline the salient viewpoints of important leaders in the American labor scene. The nature of the project determines the structure of the thesis, and so influences its method. For purposes of easy and immediate comparison with similar theses in the project, the analysis of Quill's labor philosophy is broken down into two main areas; the objectives of the labor movement, and the means used to achieve these objectives.

Under the first heading are considered Quill's views on the national and international aims of American labor and in particular his beliefs and aspirations concerning the objectives of the TWU. Under the second, the author considers both the political and economic means to attain these ends. Finally, there is a consideration of critical factors which affect every labor leader, significant areas on which he is compelled to speak, automation, the capitalist system and so on.

In this particular study emphasis will be placed on the position of public employees in relation to municipal and state government because this was the crucial issue for Quill when, in 1940, the subways passed from private to municipal ownership, and his 30,000 members of Local 100 in New York suddenly found themselves as municipal employees.

The research methodology of the thesis comprises both the library and

interview method. The primary sources include the official union newspaper now The TWU Express, formerly The Transport Voice, and even before that The Transit Bulletin; the TWU Convention Proceedings 1937-1965; the CIO Convention Proceedings 1937-1955; the AFL-CIO Convention Proceedings from 1955-1965.

In addition much valuable primary material was put at the author's disposal in the form of letters, and in particular, tape recordings of many of Quill's more important and relevant speeches. Again the author has had a personal acquaintance with Quill's private library and has discussed with him those books which most effected his thinking. Various Fact Finding Committee Reports both to the Mayor and to the New York City Transit Authority round out the primary sources.

Secondary sources, on the other hand, are not so plentiful. Apart from a few occasional articles in the Industrial and Labor Relations Review published at Cornell University, and various editorials in the New York newspapers, there are really only two valid source books: Labor Relations in the New York Rapid Transit Systems 1904-1944 by James J. McGinley, S.J. published in 1949, and Arbitration and Transit Peace by Turcott and Kheel, published in 1960.

In addition to the library method, the interview method was also used. Here the author was fortunate in having personal contacts both in the TWU at all levels, and likewise with members of the New York City Transit Authority, and certain members of the municipal administration at City Hall.

CHAPTER II

QUILL'S VIEWS ON LABOR MOVEMENT OBJECTIVES

THE NATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

Like most other labor leaders, Quill had views on the more proximate, and the more remote objectives of American labor. The more immediate ones concerned themselves with labor and the individual worker; the others affected rather the entire nation. Quill, however, would seldom differentiate, and hence he would confuse immediate with remote objectives. In the early days when branded a Communist, he expressed his views to the first convention of the TWU in 1937:

"A 30 hour week; living wage; clean and decent homes for all; better parks; better department of justice; children born as free citizens in hospitals, put up and supported by the government, and not to be born in debt - if wanting these things means being branded as a Communist, I want to carry a hammer in one hand, and a sickle in the other for the rest of my life." "

Elsewhere he outlined the objectives as:

"Full peace-time employment; freedom of labor unions; collective bargaining rights for all; complete religious freedom; equality for all, and the wiping out of race hatred; extension of free education and medical attention; old-age security; a stable economy at home for the benefit of all the people; and a firm and lasting peace." "

In this composite view, Quill indicates that labor's welfare is the nation's welfare, and that if these aims are realized for the worker, then it is the country which will benefit.

*TWU Convention Proceedings, 1937, Pg. 65

*TWU Express, April 1946

Of particular importance to Quill was the question of race hatred and he ardently endorsed all anti-discrimination and Civil Rights movements. For him this was an aim common both to the TWU and to American labor generally. Quill's views on Civil Rights go back to the early days of the TWU when the union was first founded. Quill sought a charter from the International Association of Machinists [hereinafter IAM]. The alliance was short-lived, Quill breaking with the IAM on two grounds; one, a disagreement over the principle of organization, Quill favored the industrial form, two, the question of racial discrimination on the basis of color or national origin.

Since then Quill fought to ensure that on the subways and buses, and indeed throughout labor generally, skilled jobs would be open to the Negro worker.

"Today hundreds of Negro workers are employed in every department of the transit lines of New York City. It is a fact of life so completely accepted that some workers never knew, and some have forgotten, that it wasn't always that way." ⁷

Closely allied to the objective of the American labor movement was one common to most leaders, that of organizing the unorganized. For Quill, however, this was not just a platform slogan. It was a vital reality and could only be effectuated as long as labor retained its sense of mission, its youthful drive and energy. For Quill the ultimate enemy of this initial fervor was a sense of complacency, a pseudo-respectability which in his eyes meant eventual stagnation.

⁷ TWU Express, February 1956

Time and again he warned of this danger.

"It would be well also, for many of our new trade union leaders who acquired position and security in the recent years, if they too would think back to the not-so-good-old days, and then get off their newly acquired swivel chairs and abandon their restful week-ends - and get out on the picket lines while the chance is still with us to fight for the common protection of all including themselves." *

It is the author's view that, as shall be pointed out later, these early views of Quill were of paramount importance when the question of the merger of the AFL and CIO began to be discussed.

For Quill, the American labor movement had of course to be concerned with issues like politics, social programs, and above all legislation whether Federal or State. In these respects, his views are similar to those of other prominent labor leaders.

"If the leaders of labor are able to represent workers in negotiating agreements on wages, hours, and other matters of vital concern, then they should be, and are able to represent workers in legislating or negotiating the conditions, under which they may, by law, protect the rights of all workers, and all citizens.

Only through proper representation in government can the worker be sure of a full measure of justice and protection; that what the workingmen have won will not be taken away from them; and what workingmen deserve will not be denied them." *

* Transit Bulletin, January 1946

* Speech delivered at a Convention of the American Labor Party in New York on July 29th, 1937, and reported in The Transit Bulletin August 1937.

THE INTERNATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT

Most labor leaders who are members of international labor organizations find their views modified or confirmed by leaders from other countries. In general, however, one may say that there is a certain uniformity of opinion expressed by labor leaders. A reading of speeches and public statements reveals certain ideas appearing with repetition bordering on the cliché. Thus an investigation of Quill's views on the international objectives of the American labor movement does not in fact turn up any startling departures from the trade union line. Quill believed that one quality was needed badly in many trade unions through the world, a quality for which American labor leaders had fought bitterly, and that was the freedom to organize. In this respect, American trade unions were the exemplar to unions all over the world, and the contribution of American labor was "to promote unity and understanding among people".¹⁰

In his early years, Quill was so preoccupied with the difficulties confronting him in the building up of the TWU that he had little to say about the International Objectives of the American labor movement. But with the steady development of his own union, Quill's interest in world labor problems increased, particularly after the founding of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions [hereinafter ICFTU].

"Peace, bread, freedom remain the objectives of the free unions of the world."¹¹ This involved the economic and social betterment of the

¹⁰ Transit Bulletin, April 1945 Pg. 8

¹¹ TWU Express, July 1951 Pg. 14

individual worker, the right to a living wage, to be treated with respect and dignity, the freedom to dissent, to form free and viable trade unions. In many countries, these objectives cannot be realized because of the forces of communism and totalitarianism.

In view of Quill's earlier flirtations with the American Communist Party, it is interesting to note the vehemence of his later attacks on them both at home, and in the international sphere. But for Quill this freedom of trade unions had a necessary prerequisite, one which was one of the aims of the ICFTU; namely, the promotion of full national freedom of self-government. This is one instance where Quill's Irish political experience influenced his thinking on the international objectives of American labor. For Quill there was a close connection between political self-determination and the development of a free and democratic labor movement. Hence for Quill, American labor should provide the leadership of a sort-of world wide opposition party against the forces of dictatorship. "Our aim would be to join with other trade unions all over the world in the fight against dictatorship and totalitarianism." ¹²

Through a united free labor movement all over the world, Quill believed that these forces could be met. "The trade union movement must seriously tackle the causes from which the scourge of communism comes - the abuses of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism." ¹³ Quill also felt that if world issue demanded it, the American labor movement should actively support or condemn the U.S. government.

¹² TWU Express, July 1951 Pg. 14

¹³ TWU Express, June 1955, Pg. 14

Thus it would exercise its role of leader of the free trade unions of the world. For example, in 1957, the question of the suppression of the Hungarian revolution was of supreme international importance. Other issues like self-determination in Cyprus, and the Israel question were also current. Here Quill felt that labor should actively criticize American foreign policy.

The American labor movement can best show its interest and exercise its international leadership by foreign aid, and by working in close association with the ILO and the ICFTU. Quill's concept of the ultimate international objectives of the American labor movement might be best summed up in the aims of the ICFTU:

1. The preservation of world peace.
2. The prevention of aggression.
3. The promotion of full national freedom of self-government.
4. The recognition and application of human rights, including that of unfettered trade union organization.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THE TWU

"The fundamental purpose and objectives of our union are increased wages, real job security, proper pensions and more organizations in a full and democratic America with equal rights for all." ¹⁴

Thus in TWU's first convention did Quill outline the objectives of his newly founded union. These objectives were closely allied to furthering the principle of industrial unionism and Quill all his life, believed that this form of trade unionism was most in keeping with the objectives of the American labor movement. The whole function of the union was to

¹⁴ TWU Convention Proceedings, 1937 Pg. 63

keep fighting to improve wages, hours, and working conditions of its members. Thus each bargaining session was but a preamble to the next.

"We will win what we are strong enough to take from the employers. This is a basic fact of life. What we don't win this year, we will fight to win next year. And if we aren't successful next year, we will keep up the fight until we achieve our goals. This, I believe, is the only way a responsible trade union movement can operate within the framework of a democracy." ¹⁵

Owing to the really long hours and poor working conditions, Quill made it a prime objective of his union to restore some sense of dignity to the transit worker. Quill maintained that this would mean better service for the public, and would result in the protection and enhancement of the interests of transit labor all over the country. In 1959, the 25th Anniversary year of TWU, Quill looked back and saw:

"Our greatest and most lasting contribution is TWU's achievement in restoring the rights of citizenship and dignity to the individual worker. When I speak of the rights of citizenship and dignity, I mean freedom from fear, freedom from want, freedom to speak one's mind - this is the measure of security established by our strong union organization." ¹⁶

In 1940, the status of the 30,000 members of Local 100 changed radically. This is the largest, and the parent local comprising the subway workers of New York City. In that year, the old privately owned subways passed over to municipal ownership and the workers suddenly found themselves public employees. This, of course, affected the objectives of the union, which now had to be reformulated to meet the new challenge. The aim now became the establishment for public employees of those rights

¹⁵ TWU Express, November 1953, Pg. 14

¹⁶ TWU Express, May 1959, Pg. 24

enjoyed by workers in the private sector. This included, of course, the right to strike.

But for Quill, and he expressed this sentiment many times to the author, one of the most important objectives of his union was the establishment and maintenance of job security. The first contract signed in 1937 may illustrate why this was so. It was concerned chiefly with the removal of the infamous "Red List". Inside the bus and trolley garages was a company bulletin board. One notice was the Superintendent's Request Notice, written in red ink. This notice listed those employees required to see the Superintendent before going to work. The consequence was often five to ten days suspension for some infringement of the rules, or even dismissal in certain cases. When in 1937 this list was eliminated, the workers were given some security.

"Before TWU appeared on the scene, a transit worker had far more to fear than fear itself. The boss had the right to hire and fire at will. When this union was founded, paid vacations, paid legal holidays, sound pension plans, overtime pay, even one day of rest in seven, were unknown to the transit industry." ¹⁷

When some modicum of job security was established, Quill's next objective for his union was the establishment of some form of adequate working conditions for his members, particularly those on the subways. Some knowledge of these conditions is necessary to realize why this should have been such an important objective of the TWU. There were two privately owned subway systems in New York; the Interborough Rapid Transit [IRT], the Brooklyn Manhattan Transit [BMT], and the municipally owned

¹⁷ TWU Express, May 1959, Pg. 24

Independent Subway System [IND]. As employers all three companies ruthlessly suppressed any union activity other than their own company unionism.

"There is evidence a plenty that the companies used every trick in the books, including wide-spread circulation of spies, blacklisting, yellow-dog contracts, and wholesale firings, to discourage activity in any union except one wholly dominated by transit executives." ¹⁸

With no possible redress and with the conditions of the thirties, the men worked on any terms the company chose.

"In addition to unreasonably low wages, employees had to be on duty from 5 or 6 a.m. to 9 p.m.; often with four or five hours of unpaid swing time, to complete an ordinary twelve-hour, seven-day work shift. With never a day off, these men complained that they could not see their children by daylight from one year to the next, and that they could never afford to take a day off, unless they were too ill to drag themselves to work. Nor could they quit their jobs. This was the period of the depression. Hundreds, even thousands, of applicants were available for any kind of job, and no man in his right mind would throw away a post, even one paying as little as 50 cents an hour to motormen and conductors, when the alternative was selling apples on the street." ¹⁹

Many of these men contracted some form of lung disease resulting from the long hours underground, and this coupled with the hazards of working with the electric rail led to a further objective of the TWU.

Safety had always been a major preoccupation of Quill's. In 1957, he was appointed Chairman of the National CIO's Committee on Safety and Occupational Health. The statistics of the first CIO Safety Conference in

¹⁸ Turcott and Kheel, op cit, Pg. 25

¹⁹ TWU Express, April 1952, Pg. 12

1954 revealed that two million workers a year suffered injury or disease resulting from their jobs. In transportation frequently accidents and near electrocution took place as track builders and maintainers worked with such high voltage. The managerial attitude was somewhat similar to that reflected in the experience of the Cyrus Ching in Boston. *• Quill's objective was to change that attitude by the introduction of new safety regulations, and the organization of joint committees to study the particular hazards of subway workers.

*• Cyrus Ching, "My Life in Industrial Relations" in Richard A. Lester, ed., Labor: Readings on Major Issues, New York: Random House, 1965 Pg. 10-12.

CHAPTER III

QUILL'S VIEWS ON THE MEANS NECESSARY
TO OBTAIN LABOR'S OBJECTIVES

In the last chapter we studied Quill's views on the objectives of the American labor movement, and the place of the TWU in this movement. But of more interest are the means whereby Quill set out to achieve these objectives. I say of more interest, because in many ways Quill was not at all an organization-type man. True, he did believe in the necessity for organization, but his labor philosophy is more a manifestation of his personality than a formally cut and dried set of organized opinions. Hence while there is a structural division of this study into objectives, and means, there will in fact be some overlapping. Often it is necessary to study the means in order to get some idea of the objectives.

The thesis will follow the pattern of the other studies in this project, and divide the means into two main categories: economic and political. Under economic means will be considered, the organization of workers, collective bargaining, and the use of economic force; the political means on the other hand will consider labor's relationship to political parties, the political education of members and finally Quill's views on labor legislation as a means toward achieving his objectives.

ECONOMIC MEANS

1. ORGANIZATION OF WORKERS

When in 1936 Quill met with his six fellow workers and decided to

found a union, a catchword was necessary and Quill had it: ONE UNION, ONE INDUSTRY, ONE FIGHT. From the beginning, Quill cut right across all forms of job classification, and trade unionism based on craft distinction. Throughout his entire life, he adhered firmly to the principle of industrial organization. Of course, this meant immediate trouble with IAM and resulted in the end of Quill's short-lived association with them. Quill's belief in the need for purely industrial organization had many sources, some based on his experience in Ireland; others on the teachings of James Connolly, the Irish industrial unionist; others again on the position of the craft-union in the transportation industry.

Up to the period of the emergence of the TWU, labor relations in New York City transit had been disastrous. Prior to the 1930's, repeated strikes, the frequent use of beakies, scabs, company spies, management's continued refusal to meet with the workers on a collective basis, gave rise to a rash of employee organizations, whose struggles among themselves delighted management and produced chaos.

"Some of the organizations specialized in rapid transit, some were associated with street railways generally, some were bona fide and some were not, some were strictly trade union, and some were predominately benevolent. All were related to the job, its conditions and its improvements, and none was purely fraternal, religious, or recreational. Unions were frustrated by lack of cohesion until 1916, by yellow-dog contracts until 1938, and by depression conditions until 1934." **

The early efforts to organize were all on a craft basis with the Knights of Labor and the A. F. of L. making valiant but unavailing efforts to organize transport-workers. For Quill, the only solution was industrial

** McGinley, op cit, pg. 257

unionism. Only then could company unions be broken, and only in unity would you have strength. Hence a new slogan: UNITED, INVINCIBLE. Any impediment towards organization, had, therefore, to be removed. It mattered little to Quill whether or not it was based on creed, national origin or color. Quill saw discrimination as a force hindering efficient organization and so realized early on that it would have to go, and that actions and policy would have to be uniform.

There can be no doubt about Quill's sincerity over the question of racial discrimination. As has been noted, his fight for equal job opportunities characterized his union activity from the beginning. Even before Civil Rights became an issue as such, Quill was strongly advocating equality and calling upon the government to implement its policies. He identified this objective as characteristic of the CIO.

"For decades men and women from every walk of life in America have fought for equality for the Negro people not only in public education, but in housing, job opportunities, voting rights, interstate travel, hotel, theatre and restaurant accommodations, and many other aspects of human activity. Since CIO was founded, it has been in the forefront of the struggle to abolish segregation and wipe out every form of racial and religious discrimination which has plagued our national life.

The situation in the South is growing worse. The racists can now ride in the open without their hoods. The trade union movement cannot permit these forces to go unchallenged. We must continue to speak out against this newest brand of American Fascism from the shop level to the top command of the united labor organization." **

In the new TWU, Quill followed out his unity program relentlessly and any effort by craft groups to disturb it was severely curbed. The unified

** TWU Express, February 1956, Pg. 20

opposition of management could be met only by the unified front of labor. This would be impossible if transport were to be organized on a craft basis.

"TWU became great because of its industrial form of organization. It treats all workers equally; it fights for equal hourly increases across the board, along with equal vacations, equal pensions, equal sick leave, equal paid legal holidays and equal job security. This is the very heart of the industrial form of organization—one payroll, one union—equal treatment for all. That is the way it is done throughout the CIO. That is why the CIO was founded. That is why the AFL craft union system was discredited." **

When in 1957, a section of the union sought special privileges because of their jobs, there was a tense period for a while. In 1957, the Motormen's Division of Local 100 called an unofficial 9-day strike in the subways, Quill was forced to modify his views on industrial organization and afford the motormen more voice in the negotiations, and more effective representation on the governing body of the local.

Another factor which convinced Quill that industrial unionism was essential was the type of people he had to organize. The early membership of the TWU was almost entirely Irish. Prior to Quill's emigration, Ireland was torn by Civil War. This was a bitter war and during it many emigrated to the United States. Hundreds of those who came over wound up as employees in rapid transit in New York. They had experienced the evils of disunity in their own country. They had seen what befell the early efforts of the Irish Transport and General Workers Union in the lockout of 1913 when 33,000 men in Dublin were locked out by transit and other

** TWU Express, November 1951, Pg. 24

employers. Now Quill gave them a cause for which to fight. He pointed out what disunity had done to Ireland. He showed how lack of unity among the various crafts had achieved nothing for the workers, especially the unskilled, how in fact the only solution for rapid transit workers was industrial unionism. All the old techniques came into play; secret meetings, passwords, clandestine gatherings at the various Irish halls in the city.

"These gatherings were however, ideal for organizing purposes. At such get-togethers, Quill and his small band of non-paid officials met transit men whom they otherwise could not have contacted for many years and to whom they preached the message of unionism." **

It has been mentioned that Quill's philosophy was considerably influenced by James Connolly, the Irish trade union leader. Quill had read all Connolly's works.** Connolly's picture hung over his desk, and in his editorials in TWU Express, Quill referred constantly to Connolly. But it was with regard to the method of organizing that Connolly's influence was most noticeable. Writing in 1952 Quill noted:

"It was James Connolly who showed the transport workers of America their road to liberation - almost fifty years ago. Connolly came to the United States at the turn of the century and worked here for years in various industries. He wrote very clearly about the many problems which confronted the transit worker in New York and other cities. Connolly's program of industrial unionism, projected as far back as 1908, guided us in the founding of our organization - the Independent Transport Workers Union - in April 1934. We used the teachings of Connolly as the blueprint to build our organization in the subways of New York City."

* Turcott and Kheel, op. cit., Pg. 26

** One of the works which most influenced Quill was a Socialist interpretation of Irish history by James Connolly, entitled Labor in Ireland. It was published by Maunsel and Roberts of Dublin and London in 1922

Thirty years before the CIO was founded, James Connolly wrote about the great advantages of the industrial form or organization, and of the bankruptcy of the craft unions set up." **

For Quill organization meant both political and economical strength. In his union, there were many openings for the unskilled worker. Hence he had quite a few Negroes, and this brought up the question of racial discrimination. As previously mentioned, Quill saw discrimination as an obstacle to industrial organization, and so he had no time for it. Unity was to be achieved at all costs. It is some indication of Quill's power of leadership, that not only was he able to weld into one body Irishmen who had fought on opposite sides of a Civil War, but he was likewise able to blend the Negro into his union without any undue upset.

"We achieved our present strength by unifying our people, by disappointing the employers in their attempt to keep us divided, by uniting as the only means to success, and the only means to security and democracy, all religious, racial, and political groups.

At one time we had to take on vicious battles on the question of Negro discrimination. At one time we had a battle—on the question of the transit companies giving to our fellow Negro workers equal opportunities. Some of our best members came in and said, "I am satisfied to work with the Negro brother as long as he remains a porter—and we said until the time they became motormen and worked in the mechanical department as ticket agents and guards and conductors, until that time TWU would be divided and beaten—. By the Fall of 1940, we won that fight, and today the Negro transit workers in the City of New York are marching shoulder to shoulder with the white workers in the transit industry." **

** TWU Express, April 1952, Pg. 16

** TWU Convention Proceedings, 1943, Pg. 25

However, it is necessary to study Quill's views on industrial organization not only with regard to the objectives of TWU, but also in relation to the objectives of the American labor movement as a whole. It is the author's belief that this in turn will throw some light on Quill's isolated but vehement opposition to the AFL-CIO merger. Quill's belief in industrial unionism was of course championed by the newly emerging CIO. John L. Lewis gave financial and strong moral support to the TWU.

"Speaking at the first TWU Convention in 1937, Lewis declared that 'there may have been somewhere, sometime, a better record of accomplishments than the record made by the Transport Workers Union - but I do not know of any. I know of no parallel accomplishment on the part of a newly formed union, on the part of newly elected officers, in the face of great opposition, than the accomplishment of your officers, your union and your membership.'"

Later Philip Murray likewise espoused the industrial union aspirations of the TWU. When Quill in his first handbill declared:

"We are based firmly on the principle of industrial unionism, and against company unionism and craft unionism,"

he was voicing the sentiments of the CIO: When the merger was mooted, Quill was fearful that the CIO would lose some of its sense of mission, that the industrial form of organization would be weakened, and that contact with a body which contained many racketeers, which believed in raiding and racial discrimination, would in fact weaken the American labor movement.

** Speech of John L. Lewis at TWU Convention 1937 reported in the TWU Express, May 1964, Pg. 12

** TWU Express, Pg. 7

But we can detect a certain development of thought in Quill's views on the merger. Back in 1950, he strongly supported merger moves, aided perhaps by mutual opposition to anti-labor forces in legislative bills.

"This unity is long overdue and sorely needed if we are to keep our rank strong and prepare for the blows that are being aimed at us both from the forces of the left and the right.—In closing, I would advise the members of TWU throughout the nation and elsewhere, that wherever possible, they should give full support to the unity conferences which are taking place on national scale." ³⁰

Over the years, however, as Quill became aware of the growth of racism, racketeering, and raiding in the A. F. of L., he strenuously opposed any possible merger with them. In a series of meetings prior to the Miami Convention in 1955, Quill had objected to Reuther's allegedly railroading tactics, and had challenged Reuther to allow the membership of the CIO to vote in secret referendum on the question of the merger. In a meeting of the International Executive Board of the TWU in May 1955, a resolution was drawn up which voted overwhelmingly for labor unity, provided the Constitution of the newly-formed organization, outlawed discrimination, prevented raiding, eliminated racketeering, and was really dedicated to organizing the unorganized, and to using its full resources for political action. In editorials and letters one can sense Quill's feeling of frustration, his belief that, in fact, the CIO was selling itself out to A. F. of L. Perhaps the best summary of Quill's position may be found in a letter written by him to James B. Carey, then Secretary, Treasurer of the CIO, on October 21, 1955.

³⁰ TWU Express, August, 1950, Pg. 26

"Dear Brother Carey:

I am writing you this letter in order that you may have before you a precise and unclouded understanding of the position of the Transport Workers Union of America, CIO, on the question of the proposed merger of AFL and CIO.

The most recent official action on this question was taken by our International Executive Council meeting in New York City, October 5 and 6. The Council restated the convictions and reaffirmed the actions originally taken by the delegates to our 9th Biennial Convention last February and by a meeting of our International Executive Board last May. The proposed merger Constitution was rejected for its failure to provide strong and binding guarantees against discrimination, raiding and racketeering, and for its lack of genuinely effective machinery to implement a program for organizing the unorganized. The Executive Council also directed the International Officers to conduct a referendum of the membership of the Transport Workers Union of America following the forthcoming CIO Convention to determine democratically our future course with regard to the proposed merger.

I am enclosing for your information copies of all the official decisions made by TWU on this matter.

As you are well aware, both Gus Faber and I have carried out this mandate of the Transport Workers Union by voting against the proposed merger constitution at meetings of CIO's Executive Committee and Board.

You will find enclosed with this letter a memorandum on changes proposed by TWU in the Draft Constitution. These 17 amendments are officially submitted to you for consideration by CIO members of the Unity Committee. They should close the gap between word and deed. These amendments provide final and binding machinery in the Constitution of the new federation by which any affiliate could be expelled for violation of any article in the Constitution with respect to the three vital R's—Rascism, Racketeering, and Raiding.

If we mean what we say about discrimination, raiding, corruption and organizing the unorganized, these amendments should find quick approval. I refuse to believe that the countless thousands of working men and women from the factories and mills, the shops and offices, from the mines, the ships and the railroads, have given their loyalty, their devotion and their lives for anything

less than an America whose unions would be without discrimination, without corruption, and without cannibalism.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Quill" ³¹

For Quill the merger and the question of organizing the unorganized were vitally linked, and he feared that much of the organizing fire would die down after the merger. The second Convention of the AFL-CIO movement confirmed Quill's fears. Resolution No. 125 dealt with the theme of "Organizing the Unorganized". A rather nostalgic note is sounded, immediately followed by statements which border on rationalization.

"The discussion and the adoption of the "Organizing the Unorganized" resolution was one of the high moments in the closing hours of the historic convention which merged the A. F. of L. and the CIO. Trade union delegates left the convention hall full of the idealism and determination that union people always feel when faced with the problem of organizing the unorganized. Hopes, expectation and enthusiasm ran high.

A frank evaluation of the record made in organizing the unorganized since the adoption of that resolution tells us that we have fallen short of the hopes we had, and the goals we set. But failure is not the proper way to describe our record these past two years." ³²

Speaking at a later AFL-CIO Convention on the same resolution, Quill again voiced his skepticism about the ability of the merger to effectuate its own policies.

³¹ Letter from Michael J. Quill, President, Transport Workers Union of America, to James B. Carey, Secretary Treasurer, CIO, Oct. 1955 [in the files of the union]

³² AFL-CIO Convention Proceedings 1957 Pg. 319-320

"I don't believe as has been suggested, that it is any good to adjourn this convention and allow the Executive Council to meet later to start a new crusade. We do not have the basis for a new crusade — Our trouble in the labor movement is that we never got over the hangover of the merger — You can talk about organizing the unorganized, but until we can solve the problem of inter-union raiding there is no hope. — There are other problems. We have seventeen million colored people in this country and we have not given them the leadership in the South...There is no room for a crusade, Mr. Meany, until such time as we can honestly, like grown-up people, sit down and work out our problems. What will we do about inter-union raiding? What will we do about equality for our Negro people who are crying out in the wilderness for trade unionism." ³³

For Quill, organizing the unorganized on an industrial basis meant a greater sense of solidarity with other industrial unions, a sense of unity, which craft unions lacked. In 1952 steel negotiations, Murray's fight was his fight. "The fight of the CIO Steelworkers is our fight, and the fight of all organized labor." ³⁴

All the efforts of the CIO, however, had implications reaching further than the goals of American labor. For Quill, the failure of American policy at home with regard to segregation would impair America's influence in foreign policy. With a large percentage of the world non-white, the procrastination in giving the Negro his rights, the prevalent discrimination in certain unions weakened the image of America throughout the world.

"Until we clean up the mess in our own backyard, what right has our Secretary of State to dish out advice and moral judgements to the confused and beleaguered people of Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, South East Asia — and some neighbours nearer home." ³⁵

³³ AFL-CIO Convention Proceedings, 1961, Pg. 201-202

³⁴ TWU Express, March 1957, Pg. 26

³⁵ TWU Express, February 1956, Pg 20

Quill's third objection to the merger was its failure to curtail the growing racketeering and corruption within the labor movement. Since most of the corruption existed within the A. F. of L., Quill insisted that some effort be made to clean house before a merger should take place. To be "visited with sins of strangers", as Quill remarked to the author, "left the entire labor movement open to the accusations of the McClellan Committee". His chief objection was the excessive generalizations of the McClellan findings and the branding of all labor with the sins of the few.

"We of the CIO are unfairly carrying the stigma of "corruption in labor union". We should not have been tainted with the sins of strangers. The organs of public opinion would have the world believe that not only are the members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters corrupt, but that all the 15 million members of the American labor movement are corrupt --.

There is no need for the apologetic defensive approach which has been adopted by many labor leaders today. They are giving the people of this country the impression that all members of organized labor, and surely every elected officer is guilty by association. Why don't these leaders go to the American people via radio and T.V. and prove that Dave Beck and his associates are not the labor movement of America?" ³⁶

In his own union there had never been any serious problem with regard to corruption. Local 234 in Philadelphia did have some small mishandling of funds, but those involved were immediately dismissed. With regard to corruption, Quill and his union are above reproach.

However, Quill's criticism of corruption did not interfere with his relationship with some of those indicted. In the 11th Convention of the TWU in 1961, Quill pushed forward a resolution stating that:

³⁶ TWU Express, February 1957, Pg. 20

"We opposed the merger of 1955 because it was a sham. The merger agreement document and the constitution which was presumed to make it effective, were empty documents which did not give us a basis for a truly united movement. After six disillusioning years, raiding is rampant and unchecked; racism is still a shameful blemish, far from eradication; and racketeering is the trademark of some so-called unions, which specialize in phony contracts and sweetheart deals." ³⁷

The debate on this resolution was interrupted as Quill introduced a guest speaker, James Hoffa, Teamster President. Quill's introductory remarks indicate a certain inconsistency of opinion.

"Today labor in America is at the crossroads. It is at a crisis, because of the lack of courage and clean thinking of a few people. I don't know how much anybody stole in the various locals of this union...and I don't know how much Jimmy Hoffa has stolen from anybody, but I will be damned if I will take the word of Senator McClellan for anything." ³⁸

It is the author's belief that Quill distinguished between those who were good labor leaders and still indulged in some racketeering, and those who used unionism as a means of lining their own pockets. For Quill, Hoffa was a hard working business unionist, and a blind eye was turned to his racketeering exploits.

Quill's entire attitude to the merger gives us some idea of the man's quality as a labor leader, and this has been well summed-up by Turcott.

"Yet despite some evidence that he is a dangerous opponent who believes an attack is the best defense, and doesn't care if he fights fairly or not, ³⁹, Quill has a rugged streak of forthrightness and devotion

³⁷ TWU Convention Proceedings, 1961, Pg. 203

³⁸ ibid., Pg. 214

³⁹ In the conclusion some effort will be made to evaluate the validity of this remark.

to principle that no amount of instinct for self-preservation can erase. During the two day convention of the CIO in 1955, only a week-end away from that organization's merger with the AFL, Quill arose among the delegates and denounced the merger much to the discomfiture of CIO President, Walter P. Reuther, and other union leaders. The AFL, said Quill, harbored corrupt union officials, advocates of Jim Crow practices and everything else the CIO was against.

He knew the merger could not be stayed by anything he said; he also knew that his few minutes of seemingly pointless opposition would cost him a vice-presidency, a post of considerable prestige in labor circles, in the merged federation. Nevertheless, he said his piece, with all the fervor he possessed, while other CIO vice-presidents of presumably greater stature who secretly felt as he did, remained silent. Important as an AFL-CIO vice-presidency was to Quill, still more important was the inner urge to warn the CIO that some day its leaders would regret the wedding with the AFL the following week. Many of them now do, and for the very reasons that Quill enounced four years ago." ⁴⁰

For Quill the binding factor which really cemented the organizational gains was the union shop. In his own union, strong advances were made and with the union shop in effect, Quill was able to continue organizing. But then in 1940, when the status of Local 100 was changed ⁴¹, the union shop was lost. In the Air Transport Division of the Union, the union shop is still in effect as the members of this division come under the provisions of the Railway Labor Act. Quill's views on the importance of the union shop in relation to organization do not differ substantially from those of other labor leaders. For him the union shop is the American way —

⁴⁰ Turcott and Kheel, op. cit., Pg. 34

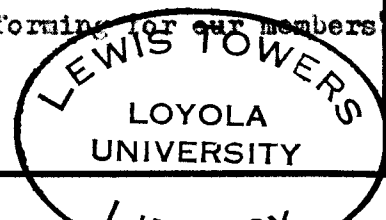
⁴¹ of. Pg. 33 A

majority rule in a democracy. It is valid for politics: it should be valid for unionism. The remaining arguments are quite familiar; all benefit, therefore, all should join; the union shop means effective collective bargaining; without the union shop you have minority groups, hence lack of unity in fighting unified corporation and employers.

Quill's concept of organization was not however confined to the acquisition of new members. It included also the methods whereby these members' interest in the union could be kept alive. This, of course, was one respect, obvious, for financial reasons. If there did not exist a union shop, or maintenance-of-membership situation, then the union stood to lose members, and hence dues. But apart from this Quill held strongly to a maintenance of interest in the union, and aside from an adroit use of his own personality, he believed firmly in good-two-way communications. This was true both for the CIO and the TWU.

I was assured by one top-ranking union official that in the early days of television, Quill wanted the CIO to purchase a television station and use it to keep people informed on labor's activities. He himself made repeated TV appearances in New York, using them to further his organizational aims. In the TWU itself, Quill sought to have local meetings televised, did in fact have his conventions periodically televised over the well known networks, "so that our members who cannot attend, and the families of transit workers will have a better idea of the problems we are facing in TWU, and of the services we are performing for our members."

⁴² TWU Express, February 1962, Pg. 20



In addition, there should be "system-wide departmental meetings to be held regularly to discuss the hundreds of grievances which come up." ⁴³

2. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Michael Quill was a typical old-line labor leader. He had fought to found a union, and realized quite early on that the whole raison d'etre of his union's existence was to exercise the function of collective bargaining. Despite his frequent reference to strikes, in his use of them, as we shall see, he adhered firmly to the principle that the path to industrial peace lay through intelligent collective bargaining. The individual's right to this was on the same basis as his right to freedom of speech, and so was not to be denied any citizen in the public or private sector. In an early editorial, Quill was convinced that "collective bargaining should be for all employees, not only for those in private industry, but for city, state and federal employees as well." ⁴⁴

Few labor leaders can speak with such feeling as Quill when it comes to the question of collective bargaining. Having fought for the right to bargain with "recalcitrant" employers both in New York and Pennsylvania, Quill had to renew the fight in 1940 when the old I.R.T. and B.M.T. passed from private to public ownership, and were united with the Independent Subway System [IND] as a municipally run organization. This now meant a substantial alteration in the labor-management situation. As

⁴³ TWU Express, February 1962, Pg. 20

⁴⁴ Transit Bulletin, 1948, Pg. 16

private employees, the TWU had a closed shop, the right to strike, and was the sole bargaining agent for the majority of transit workers. But with the transition all these features were stripped from it. On March 13, 1940, Mayor La Guardia stated the city's position on labor relations under municipal operation:

"Employees are free to join any labor organization they desire. There is no compulsion to join or not to join. Collective bargaining is recognized. That means that employees may confer collectively with managing officials concerning wages, salaries, and working conditions, through representatives chosen by themselves. In addition to that, the right of petition and hearing will be available to all employees and groups of employees without distinction or discrimination — the right of strike against the government is not, and cannot be recognized." ⁴⁵

As seems to be the case in the entire labor relations story in rapid transit, no plan was devised to ensure a smooth transition from private to public ownership, and it was foolish to think the fiery TWU would meekly accept the new situation. "From June 1940 to the end of 1944, extensive confusion characterized industrial relations on the New York City Transit Systems; ill-tempered policy was opportunistically forged by too many smiths, and the results were unsatisfactory to all." ⁴⁶

The newly formed Board of Transportation, with craft-union supporters on the Board, refused to follow La Guardia's suggestions, and would not enter into any sort of collective agreement with any union, least of all the TWU.

⁴⁵ New York Times, March 1940. Quoted by Edward P. Sussna in his article "Collective Bargaining on the New York Transit System 1940-1957".

ILR Review II [July 1958], Pg. 520.

⁴⁶ McGinley, op. cit., Pg. 299

"The Board members then persuaded the Mayor to eat his words and to join them in a Supreme Court action for a declaratory judgement to affirm the Board's contention that it had no power to bargain for government employees pay and working conditions with a union." ⁴⁷

It would take us too far afield to go into a detailed study of the history of TWU's fight for bargaining rights. Suffice it to say that from 1940 to 1953, Quill fought the Board of Transportation to achieve the right of exclusive representation, and the union shop. Quill believed that one industrial union with sole bargaining rights would bring about peace to the labor scene. The employers on the other hand refused to sign a contract with any union, and favored the multiple unit system of craft unionism.

Frequent Fact-Finding Committees put forward suggestions but the Board agreed only to a signing of a "Memorandum of Understanding" which differed from a normal agreement in that it was a recindable agreement by the Board at any time providing the union received a 45-day notice. Then in 1953, the present Transit Authority was set up. Two members were appointed by the Governor, two by the Mayor, and the fifth by the other four. It is today a three man Board. Under the new Board, Quill's efforts for recognition were again frustrated and we had further Fact-Finding Committees in 1953 and 1957. In 1954, the TWU won 92 percent of the votes in a representative election, but still the Authority refused to enter into a binding contract on the grounds that it was a municipal employer, and as such, not able or bound to enter into a binding agreement or to recognize any one union exclusively.

⁴⁷ Turcott and Kheel, op. cit., Pg. 38

Quill still believed in bargaining as the solution, and was supported by the Fact-Finding Committees though his militant and capricious tactics did come in for criticism. The 1956 Committees Report contains some of the strongest remarks on labor relations that the author has ever read.

"—The sorry relationship between leaders of the principal labor organization, the Transport Workers Union, and the active heads of the city's transit system is no overnight affair.

An examination of the history of transit in New York since unification in 1940, shows that the parties have lived in a labor relations nightmare, studded with a record of conduct which made it impossible for any attempt to achieve labor peace———

This type of thinking by transit management and the TWU has made a shamble of decent labor relations over the years. It has encouraged flagrant feather-bedding, shameful inefficiencies, petty chiseling, and a complete erosion of the type of loyalty which any employer has a right to expect of his employees——."48

However in 1954, Quill achieved a first in collective bargaining for his union, a signed contract providing exclusive bargaining rights between a labor union representing public employees, and a government agency. The precise legal nature of this collective bargaining achievement was, however, somewhat indeterminate. There was in fact no federal or state law which allowed legal collective agreements for public employees, and in New York strikes by public employees were declared illegal by the New York Civil Service law 108, the so-called Condon-Wadlin Act. In April 1967 the rights of public employees received full legal status, but as before,

⁴⁸ Report of the New York City Transit Fact-Finding Committee to Robert F. Wagner, Mayor of the City of New York, 1954; Pg. 6-8

the right to strike was specifically excluded.

"Public employees shall have the right to form, join, and participate in, or refrain from forming, joining, or participating in, any employees organization of their own choosing. Public Employees shall have the right to be represented by employee organization to negotiate collectively with their public employers in the determination of their terms and conditions of employment, and the administration of grievances arising thereunder....No public employee or employee organization shall engage in a strike, and no employee organization shall cause, instigate, encourage, or condone a strike." ⁴⁰

Despite the apparent capriciousness of Quill's bargaining tactics, it is the author's belief that the peculiar nature of the transport industry enabled Quill to bargain in a quite methodical fashion. When an advance was made in one section of the industry, he would use that as a lever on the remainder. In 1949, Quill was bargaining hard for a 5-day, 40-hour week with no loss of take home pay for his subway workers. Having achieved this, he turned his attention to the privately owned bus lines, which he struck in 1953 for twenty-eight days. But from his strike came the 5-day, 40-hour week and the first two dollar an hour rate for bus drivers in the country. As previously mentioned, job security was another big bargaining issue, and led Quill to strike the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1960 to secure protection for his members.

In the actual process of negotiation, Quill possessed that quality common to all great bargainers, a sense of timing, a realization of the precise moment when to compromise. While in later life, his real relations with the chief members of the Transit Authority were quite amicable, he was

⁴⁰ Session Laws 1967; Civil Service Laws State of New York, Ch. 392, Art. 14

careful to avoid any appearance of accommodation; and he would cheerfully hurl epithets at his best friends in order to perpetuate the correct image with the rank and file. Humor was a tactic he used quite frequently, and caring little for public opinion, he rejoiced in being called peppery, blustery and intracable. But while some of his wit at the bargaining table appeared aimless, most of it was the result of well thought out spontaneity.

"Quill has a persistent habit of taking himself and his union out on one bargaining limb after another; he couples it with an uncanny ability to find a way to get off and, at the last minute, to grab enough concessions to justify claiming a monumental victory for TWU. I have written ⁸⁰ many thousands of critical words about him, his tactics and the frequent panics into which he has thrown New Yorkers with his threat of strikes, but somehow I cannot escape the conclusion that he possesses more courage, imagination and trade-union fervor than dozens of his peers who proclaim their own devotion to the workmen, but do precious little to augment his wages." ⁸¹

After each session, Quill would analyze what went on and thus learn for the future. In his editorials, he warned the younger and more impatient members of his union "to take careful note of the weapons which had to be used to bring about the 40-hour week, because some of those weapons will have to be used again and again to protect our present gains and forge ahead to new victories." ⁸²

In the solution of labor disputes, Quill readily agreed to arbitration, provided he got his man. Here again in the New York situation, a bitter

⁸⁰ For many years, Mr. Turcott was labor writer and on the editorial staff of the New York Daily News.

⁸¹ Turcott and Kheel, op. cit., Pg. 35

⁸² TWU Express, June 1952, Pg. 32

fight took place with the Transit Authority which wanted an impartial advisor whose recommendations would not be binding. In 1956, Theodore W. Kheel was finally named Impartial Chairman whose rulings would be final and binding. With the establishment of a good transit arbitrator, an immense step was taken on the path to transit peace.

3. THE USE OF ECONOMIC FORCE

It is in the strike area of industrial relations that the name of Michael Quill may be best remembered. Few labor leaders have used this weapon so effectively, and few have threatened to use it so frequently. But as in all other areas, Quill's philosophy concerning the use of the strike is not as haphazard as it might seem. Quill in fact was not strike-happy, and it is the author's belief that he relied more on the threat, than on the actual strike itself. This is not to say however that Quill did not avail of the strike weapon, and a brief resume of his strike activities might well be made here. TWU's first strike was in 1949 when the flight service workers of American Airlines hit the bricks. Prior to 1949 it was the policy of the Communist-run unions not to have strikes. But with the break in 1948 attitudes changed. This strike in particular demonstrates this point, as it was based more on intra-union politics rather than on actual bargaining issues. After the 1948 break with the Communists, the pro-Communist presidents of some of the American Airlines locals pushed for large wage increases with their members. To maintain control the new Administration of the union had to support these demands or face the possibility of losing the locals. In 1952 Quill had a small

strike among the cafeteria workers in Columbia University. TWU had already organized the maintenance workers but had a subsequent five week strike in their efforts to organize the cafeteria workers. In 1953 Quill struck the privately-owned bus companies of New York for twenty-nine days to move from the 48 to the 40-hour week without loss of take home pay. This resulted in the 5-day week for the bus drivers. In 1960 a strike of major proportions took place on the Pennsylvania Railroad. The issues were job security and work rules. The honoring of the TWU pickets resulted in the involvement of 25,000 men in the strike. It lasted twelve days with Quill securing many of his demands. In 1961 Quill called his first and only Utilities strike. He struck the Brooklyn Union Gas Company for five weeks in an effort to achieve higher wages.

Of course the really big strike, the climactic subway strike of 1965 deserves more extensive treatment and will be dealt with at the end of this section.

Back in 1961, Quill engaged in a lively television debate with Congressman Fred Hartley of the Taft-Hartley Act. The motion was: "Should Public Employees have the right to strike?" In his opening remarks Quill asserted that "public employees should have the rights that every American citizen has. If they do not have this right, then they become second-class citizens."⁵³ In his affirmation of this right, an affirmation which concerned a vital section of his union, Quill, of course

⁵³ Tape recording of the Michael Quill - Congressman Hartley debate "Should Public Employees have the Right to Strike" on N.B.C. T.V., January 7, 1961.

met concerted opposition particularly from the legislature and the public.

The lawmakers opposed Quill on the basis of the Condon-Wadlin Act. This act declares that strikes by public employees are illegal, and that any public employee who strikes, automatically forfeits his employment. A striker may be rehired at the discretion of the employer, but not at higher wages.

"Until 1963, the law provided that the wage freeze was to remain in effect for three years after the striker's re-employment, and that he was to be on probation for five years. Chapter 702 of the Laws in 1963 amended the section pertaining to re-employment to reduce the wage freeze and probation periods to six months and one year respectively. The last section of the amending act provided that "this act shall take effect immediately, and its provisions shall be applicable to violations occurring on or after such a date, and shall remain in force and effect until July 1, 1965.

The evident expectation of the legislature that another revision would be enacted before the expiration of the 1963 temporary amendment was never fulfilled. The Governor vetoed the bill passed in 1965, and the general understanding was that the old [pre-1963] penalty provisions were back in effect." ⁵⁴

These penalties, however, had not been imposed on previous strikers and Quill realized this. This "is such a severe punishment for workers rehired after a strike that on one has the heart, no matter how flagrant the offense, to insist on a strict adherence to the law penalties. This weakens the law and works against its influence." ⁵⁵ When the great

⁵⁴ Report of Committee on Municipally-Owned Utilities, by Sidney Brandes, Chairman General Counsel, New York City Transit Authority. [National Institute of Municipal Law Officers, 1966 Annual Conference] Pg. 1-2 [Mimeographed]

⁵⁵ New York Times, December 18, 1957

transit strike of 1966 was under way, Quill realized that not only were wages and hours at stake, but also the future of the Condon-Wadlin Act. There can be little doubt that the New Public Employees Act of 1967, the so-called Taylor Law, was hastened by the strike.

Quill had always been proud of the fact that his strikes were well ordered and short. The union's chief function during a strike is to keep up good communications, primarily with the rank and file, and then with the entire labor movement in a given community. Other organized workers and their families are contacted through leaflets, newspaper advertisement, and radio programs. "And now we use the most modern and most effective medium - television, to bring our story into the homes of the workers and their families." ⁵⁶

"Strikes in transit industry result from three sided stupidity: one the employer who ignores the fact that organized labor is here to stay, and obstinately refuses to bargain; two, the union officer who is so far removed from his own membership, that he is afraid to give his rank and file the facts of life as far as a strike situation is concerned; three, the irresponsible group of strike happy windbags who shout long and loud at local meetings and stampede the majority into a strike when a strike is not necessary. When a strike is necessary, we must be prepared to give that strike the best of our talent, energy, and experience; but when in the opinion of the local officers or executive board, a strike is not the answer, we must be prepared to speak out boldly against it, no matter how unpopular that stand may be." ⁵⁷

As has been stated, Quill believed more in the threat of a strike than in its actual fulfillment. A union without this threatening power

⁵⁶ TWU Express, May 1952, Pg. 16

⁵⁷ TWU Express, May 1952, Pg. 16

was inept and futile, and even as Quill fought for public employees to have this right, he himself tried whenever possible to avoid its use, falling back on the power of the threat.

"For 22 years, we have been saying that with 100 key men, we could tie up the subways of New York. We couldn't sustain the tie-up longer than maybe a day or two, ** but who would we be tying up? Six million working people! The bankers could afford to take the day off. Sure, we had threatened strikes. Sure, we had meetings. Sure, we marshalled labor groups right down the line, and always we found some compromise to solve these problems.-----

When you work in a utility, it is different from an auto plant, or a steel plant, because with power comes responsibility. While we make all the maneuvers and all the motions, you have to be mighty careful before you shut down the subways of New York and leave six million people stranded." **

But there can be no doubt that despite this responsible attitude, Quill was well aware of his strong economic force in view of the type of service his union controlled-- transportation, whether surface, rapid, or in the air. This, the author believes accounts for Quill's readiness to threaten strike. Writing in his editorials, he referred to the many battles to achieve contracts. "However because of our economic strength in a key area affecting some 8,000,000 people--agreements were reached with practically no sacrifice on the part of transit workers themselves." **

However, despite Quill's awareness of his economic bargaining power, and his hesitancy to strike the subways, strike them he did on January 1st,

** Since state law forbids employees to strike, there is consequently no provision for strike funds for that section of TWU covering public employees.

** TWU Express, August 1956, Pgs. 18-20

** TWU Express, February 1960, Pg. 20

1965, with a 10-day strike which cost the city of New York 100 million dollars a day. A brief analysis of that strike is necessary both to bring this material up to date, and also throw some light on Quill's use of the strike weapon.

There is little doubt in the author's mind that Quill in no way wanted or sought the 1966 subway strike. There have been suggestions that the personality clash between Mayor Lindsay and Quill ultimately gave rise to the strike. This does justice to neither man. Quill would not imperil his control over Local 100 on the basis of a personality problem. This was only one of several factors which contributed to the strike. Perhaps the basic one was the general confusion resulting from the change of administration. Wagner attended some of the talks; at a very late stage Lindsay entered into the fray and Joseph O'Grady, Chairman of the Transit Authority was due to retire. All in all Quill was unhappy. "We're closer to a strike now than in any other time in our history. O'Grady, an experienced man is getting out; Mayor Wagner, experienced in mediation is getting out; John Lindsay is coming in with new faces we are not keen about."

Another factor was Quill's belief that once it has taken a stand, a union cannot back down an inch no matter the consequences. The union offer was made early in November. By December 29th there was still no counter offer from the Transit Authority. Quill's demands were, of course, outlandish, but he refused to budge until some terms were put forward by management. In the interval the mediation panel was unrealistically

" New York Times, December 27th, 1965, Pg. 30, Col. 1

optimistic and the Chairman of the panel, Dr. Nathan Feinsinger, Professor of Law at the University of Wisconsin at times gave the impression that things were moving. But Quill knew otherwise. In previous years the Transit Authority had had some assurance of financial aid from the Mayor or possibly the Governor. But not so in 1966. Wagner refused to budget for the new administration; Lindsay did not know what he could settle for; and Rockefeller refused state aid on the grounds that he would be besieged by other cities for similar assistance. Again, Lindsay, for obvious political reasons did not want to increase the 15 cent fare. This would be a poor start for the new Mayor.

It is the author's belief that Quill realized all these factors, and though pessimistic, felt that he must prove himself under the new administration, even as he had done under the old. In this sense the strike was not only a labor dispute, but a test of Quill's strength and control over his men. This could account for the added histrionics during the negotiations, and for the combination of obstinacy and pessimism throughout. "If it going to cost money to keep the subways and buses running, we don't care where it is going to come from"; ⁶² "I have never had reason to be less optimistic about reaching a settlement than this year." ⁶³ In fact the Transit Authority did not make their counter-offer until 8 p.m. on January 31st. The delay, as was mentioned, was due to lack of funds, uncertainty as to the source of funds, [Wagner? Lindsay? Rockefeller?],

⁶² New York Times, December 15th 1965, Pg. 39, Col. 3

⁶³ ibid., December 27th 1965, Pg. 30, Col. 1

and possibly an effort to call Quill's bluff. Quill then saw the strike to be inevitable as the gap between the offer and the counter-offer was too large to be closed in the time remaining. The actual strike was used by Quill to pressurize the Authority into more acceptable demands. Hence the fulfilment of the slogan: "No Contract, No Work". It would have been unthinkable to keep the men on the job and continue the negotiations. Realizing the penalties under the law Quill had instructed his second line of bargainners, who took over when he was jailed. It was in fact these men who finally hammered out the contract. Quill's activities during the negotiations and prior to his collapse in the Bellevue Hospital were motivated partly by the fact that he had to hold his position or face an angry rank and file; partly by his love of the limelight and the image he was creating.

Subsequent to the strike the author visited Quill in Mount Sinai Hospital, and questioned him about his reaction to it. Quill regarded it as one of the best things that could have happened to the union. "A strike shows up weaknesses, it brings out the potential leaders, it indicates those who are not fully committed," he said. In general one may say that Quill believed that a well-run strike can be of great value for the leaders of the union, giving them a clearer idea of the cohesion and militancy of their members. Quill also saw the strike as being a great unearther of money. Despite management's assurance that they have no funds, money is suddenly found as the strike progresses. This was borne out in the 1966 strike when, after the contract, Rockefeller gave 100 million dollars to the city to try and help it recover. But in this strike, and indeed in all

his threats to strike, there was, of course, the question of the public interest, and the resulting inconvenience from the strikes. A discussion of this problem is, however, more suitable in the conclusion of this study, where the author will endeavor to present a critical review of Quill's labor philosophy.

B. POLITICAL MEANS

1. RELATIONSHIP TO POLITICAL PARTIES

In his early years, Quill echoed the non-involvement and voluntarist line of Gompers and of the later CIO. A resolution in the Chicago Convention expresses Quill's viewpoint: "The political activity of the CIO must, and will be continued on a non-partisan basis, giving support to the progressive forces in both major parties, and basing its judgement of candidates solely on their records." ⁸⁴ As far back as 1937, Quill maintained that one's political beliefs were one's own concern, and one could base one's vote on this. These personal beliefs, religious, political or others, of either the officers or members of the Union are the concern of each and every member alone." ⁸⁵ But a growing awareness of the importance of the labor vote led him to the conclusion that labor must support its friends. Hence, the Political Action Committee of the CIO [hereafter PAC] should be used as a means of acquiring new favorable

⁸⁴ TWU Convention Proceedings, 1948, Pg. 114

⁸⁵ Transit Bulletin, August 1937

legislation, and spiking anti-labor activities, "so that labor should have a full voice in the selection and election of the 1944 candidates." ⁶⁶ This was based on the traditional labor view that "we are in political action because we want to maintain through the legislative halls, the gains we have made through our union.-----CIO non-partisan policy is in keeping with America's needs." ⁶⁷

For Quill being non-partisan was a two-way street. Not only must labor be free to support either political party, but it must also be independent of any pressure by politicians at all levels. If politicians do not interfere with unions, then gains will be made. To secure a 12-point program with the Board of Transportation, Quill called a half-day work stoppage. This succeeded and "shows that the leadership of TWU, when free of political party strings can demonstrate the plight of its members to the people in a most dramatic and militant manner." ⁶⁸ When the 40-hour week was won, the same note was sounded: "This latest victory was won because of a correct trade union approach. It was won because the leadership of Local 100 was free to act without political ties or strings." ⁶⁹

Quill's personal intervention into politics, as a candidate for the American Labor Party, seriously modified his thinking on the question of the non-partisan policy of the CIO. Slowly he came round to the view, one

⁶⁶ Transit Bulletin, September 1943

⁶⁷ Transit Bulletin, August 1944

⁶⁸ TWU Express, April 1950, Pg. 20

⁶⁹ TWU Express, April 1951, Pg. 20

which he never later abandoned, that what America needed was a third party, a Labor Party. Quill's own views towards the American Labor Party fluctuated considerably. By 1953 he had lost all faith in it. That year, the party ran a candidate for Mayor of New York, but for Quill "from organized labor's point of view, the American Labor Party and its candidates cannot be taken seriously, because it does not have the support of even the smallest fraction of voters." ⁷⁰ For Quill, the solution was not the creation of the perfect candidate. "Since when have we in labor become so unrealistic that we will touch only the perfect candidate." ⁷¹ Rather what was needed was an effort to make the rank and file realize the importance of the relationship between their political vote and their trade unionism. "Too many working people believe that the union contract on wages, hours, pensions, and working conditions is the end-all of labor organization. They still fail to understand that our enemies in the legislative hall can tear these contracts to shreds by scuttling rent controls, by permitting runaway prices on food and clothing and by wrecking our pensions and social security benefits.----- Let us protect what we have gained through our union halls by our vigilance at the ballot box." ⁷²

Quill was of the opinion that PAC was failing to do this. Despite his insistence on a third party, however, he continued to endorse those Democratic candidates who were working for labor. But by 1954, and with thoughts of the merger in mind, Quill's disillusionment with labor's

⁷⁰ TWU Express, October 1953, Pg. 20

⁷¹ TWU Express, November 1950, Pg. 20

⁷² TWU Express, November 1950, Pg. 20

relationship to the political parties was complete. In an important speech on the resolution supporting PAC-CIO, Quill voiced his fears.

"I have some doubts now, that after watching PAC for many years, as to the advisability of carrying on PAC in its present blueprints. I am afraid as we roll along year after year that we are tying ourselves tighter and tighter to the Democratic Party—I don't know what the officers of the CIO would like to do, or what you the delegates would like to do, but I believe that, good and all as the job has been done in PAC, serious consideration should be given to building in America a really and truly independent political party of CIO, so that workers will have the choice to stand up separately and apart from any of the existing parties." ⁷³

Quill's reasons were chiefly the failure of many of the Democratic states to do anything about the right-to-work legislation and their failure to do anything about racial discrimination. Even if a national party were not possible,

"then we should at least give some serious consideration to forming labor parties in the states throughout this country where it is impossible for us to walk with the existing Democratic Party." ⁷⁴

But what precisely Quill meant by a labor party is difficult to determine. In his editorial letter later that year, Quill, while agreeing that Philip Murray and Sidney Hillman had done a good job with PAC, declared that its later programs were too specific and not extensive enough. But, "I want to make it clear that an independent political party of labor does not mean that it must on any and every occasion run candidates of its

⁷³ CIO Convention Proceedings, 1954, Pg. 479-481

⁷⁴ CIO Convention Proceedings, 1954, Pg. 483-488

own in opposition to the candidates of the existing parties." ⁷⁵ It is hard to conceive of a party without candidates, and it appears as though Quill had not thought out fully his opinions on this matter. It must be remembered, however, that "New York State's unique electoral legislation permits third parties to exist even when they simply endorse the candidates of the major parties. Hence, a number of labor parties have appeared from time to time in New York's recent history. In 1962, Van Arsdale sought to construct a comparable instrument in the Brotherhood Party which, with the opposition of the Port Council and the Liberal Party, was unable to gather momentum and was shortly abandoned." ⁷⁶

In issues like Civil Rights, Quill did not believe in contributing to the support of the Democratic Party, when such support involved the election of anti-labor and racist Senators in the South. In a situation like this, the political arm of labor was inadequate, and unable to cope with the prejudices of politicians. In his later years, Quill laid even greater stress on the third party. In repeated editorials and in speeches to conventions, he again affirmed the inadequacy of COPE and the fact the labor, had, in reality, no independent vote. In his last Presidential Report, to TWU's 12th Convention he again appealed for a third party.

"Before labor's independent political action diminishes to the vanishing point, there must be a continued drive for a labor party in the United States that would operate

⁷⁵ TWU Express, December 1954, Pg. 20

⁷⁶ Alice H. Cook and Lois S. Gray, Labor Relations in New York City, [Ithaca New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, May 1966.] Reprint Series, No. 191, Pg. 100 footnote 49.

free and independent of either the Republican or Democratic Parties. An effective labor party could generate much needed and powerful stimulus for the enactment of labor's programs to benefit all America." ⁷⁷

2. POLITICAL EDUCATION OF MEMBERS

However, all demands for a third party would be fruitless if the rank and file were not educated concerning the issues which vitally affected them.

"The labor movement must always keep the worker aware of the political and economic issues which affect him. It must, through his local, point out possible pitfalls, the uncontrolled bitterness of adversity, the complacency of prosperity." ⁷⁸

When PAC was replaced with COPE, Quill encouraged his members to support COPE, to contribute at least a dollar to protect their union gains. Within his own union, vital elections were analysed to show those Senators or Congressmen who had supported or opposed labor.

The favorable legislation of the New Deal made Quill realize the importance of having a strong voice in politics. But this could be achieved only through getting out the greatest number of votes. Therefore, not only the workers, but also the families must be educated. This, however, posed a problem for Quill, and here one can detect a change in opinion. In his early years, Quill believed that one's political affiliations were one's own business, and that no one had the right to advise another how to vote.

⁷⁷ President's Report to 12th Constitutional Convention, Transport Workers Union of America, 1965. Pg. 200

⁷⁸ TWU Express, April 1953.

"I am not trying to shove my nationality or my religion, or my political beliefs down the throat of anybody. That is my private life, and I warn you again let it remain my private life." 7* And again, "the personal beliefs---political or others of either the officers or members of this Union are the concern of each and every member alone." 8* But this put Quill in a dilemma. If the members followed their own political fancy, then how could you achieve a labor vote? The only answer was so to educate the members that they would see that voting for this or that candidate was in their own interest. This was to be done at international and at local level. At each convention, Quill urged that each member of his union contribute one dollar to COPE so that financial aid might be made available in helping labor's candidates. In 1961, a detailed program of political education was outlined at the 11th Constitutional Convention. This program reflects Quill's thinking and is confirmed by him in his editorials in the TWU Express.

The Committee recommends to the convention that the following program be implemented in every local union:

1. Set up a COPE Committee in every local and it shall be the duty of the Local Officers and Executive Board to actively support the COPE Committee.
2. A year-round registration program utilizing a centralized filing and checking system for all members by supplying membership lists to the local COPE upon request of the local COPE chairman and with his guarantee that the lists shall be kept secret from everyone except COPE workers.

7* TWU Convention Proceedings, 1937, Pg. 647 [Emphasis supplied]

8* Transit Bulletin, August 1937

3. An active day-to-day education program to keep rank and file members informed on political matters affecting them.

Notification of all affiliates when legislation which involves the general welfare of labor, favorable or unfavorable, is introduced in city, county, state or nation law-making bodies.

4. Development of techniques of participation by union members in the political life of our society through visits to legislators at home, delegations to the legislative halls, letters, and participation campaigns.

The attendance of local union COPE committees at national COPE conferences held each year throughout the country.

5. Active support of the national COPE drive of a voluntary contribution of one dollar per member, realizing that if all constituent unions do not participate in COPE affairs, the energy put forward by the few organizations may well be wasted. In this connection, it is noted that legislative gains are shared by all trade union members, by those who contribute their dollars as well as by those who fail to respond. It is noted further that if working people are to make their gains more secure, they must help to finance a campaign of action for the purpose of electing their friends and defeating their enemies.

6. That we continue to strengthen our COPE program by integrating the family voter into the political action program of our organization through full participation of women members of TWU and of the wives, widows, sisters and daughters of our members in the development and activities of COPE. ^{s1}

Quill believed that much of the political action needed to be carried on at an individual level. "Keep writing and visiting your Representatives.

^{s1} TWU Convention Proceedings 1961; Pg. 258-259.

When they do a good job, compliment them. When they slip-up, make your pleasure known. When Congressmen complain that you are trying to pressurize them, you can tell them that you have no intention of letting off this pressure. Because when the ballots are cast, your responsibility does not end. It merely starts then." **

Apart from the necessity at a national level, Quill was even more aware of the need for political education and activity in Local 100, the dominant local of the Union. This was so because of the complex and involved relationship which exists in New York between labor unions and City Hall. Hence, the election of the Mayor of New York is of vital interest to the TWU and during the campaigns, the union exerts considerable pressure on its members and normally comes out strongly in favor of one candidate. In the 1965 election, Quill heavily endorsed Abraham Beame, and his members were instructed to do likewise. The loss of this election to John Lindsay was a severe blow to Quill and may have been a contributing cause of the 1966 transit strike.

Likewise in the State Legislative, Quill believed that unions should have a voice and that gains won could only be maintained by "A response to political action, and by voluntary contributions to fighting funds and to COPE." ** Through these "they have given Local 100 the weapons it needed in fighting off the hordes in Albany and Washington." ** In New

** TWU Express, February 1960; Pg. 20

** President's Report to 11th Constitutional Convention, Transport Workers Union of America, 1961, Pg. 71

** Ibid.

York, "these large unions can exert telling influences on the structure of local political parties, and they are listened to at the State Capitol in Albany." **

Since Local 100 TWU is one of the largest unions in New York, its influence over legislation is considerable. "Some of the new unions, as they have grown rapidly in size, have found legislators not only willing to listen to them, but eager to sponsor their legislation. The union's presumed influence with their members and others attract legislators of both parties who seek channels to voters." **

3. LABOR LEGISLATION

The aim of all political involvement, and of political education was, for Quill, to ensure the passing of legislation favorable to labor.

"America would have been much happier today if, forty, fifty, and sixty years ago, the Molly Maguires, the Knights of Labor, and other early movements had had the benefit of such labor laws [Wagner and Little Wagner Act] brought about by political action." **

This was true on the national level; it was also true on the local level. In his own activities as a Councilman, he fought for legislation governing rent control, housing, tax control and school and recreation facilities. Like other labor leaders, he bitterly opposed the Taft-Hartley Act, and the Landrum-Griffin Act, and saw the New Deal era as the highpoint of labor's

** Cook and Gray, op.cit., Pg. 90

** Ibid. Footnote 49

** TWU Express, May 1950

legislative history. Quill threw himself completely into the fight to achieve certain amendments to the Taft-Hartley. A resolution on "Federal Labor Legislation" reflects his views.

"The outrageous injustices of the Taft-Hartley Act and its shamefully obvious intent to deprive the working of any effective defense against ruthless exploitation were documented by labor's spokesmen and impelled even the conservative Eisenhower Administration to pledge itself in 1952 and again in 1956 to support constructive amendments." **

Quill's solution, proposed in the same resolution, was "to promulgate immediately a Code of Labor Rights based upon the Wagner Act, and applicable throughout the United States, superseding all conflicting legislation; excising from all statute laws the cancerous provisions of Taft-Hartley and Landrum-Griffin." **

A further legislative goal of Quill's was the securing of legislation to provide medical care for the aged. In his Presidential Report in 1961, he stated his views.

"TWU will continue to support the efforts of organized labor to secure legislation providing a comprehensive Federal Medical Care Program for our growing population of Senior Citizens. In 1920, only one out of every 20 Americans was 65 years of age or older. Today, one out of every 11 falls into that age group. First among the New Frontiers to be conquered is providing medical and hospital care for the aged. TWU will continue its conscientious and determined efforts to secure the enactment of this necessary legislation within the next year." **

** TWU Convention Proceedings, 1961, Pg. 77

** Ibid.

** President's Report, 11th Constitutional Convention, TWU, 1961; Pg. 184

On the question of minimum wage legislation, Quill saw it as a type of control on the movements of industry seeking cheap labor. He maintained that there were many people who worked for less than the minimum wage. The solution to this situation was through political action on one hand, and an intensification of the organizing drive on the other. In a situation where working for less than the minimum wage was tolerated, all labor could suffer.

"But we have to watch out for one thing. If a segment of the working people of any state or any city is unemployed, or if they are working for 1.25 1.50 or less, all of you are in danger of your own states being dragged down. So our job is in our own small way to pull them up." ⁹¹

Hence, the full support of organized labor should be thrown behind Minimum Wage Legislation.

In general, Quill's attitude to labor legislation is a two sided one. On the one hand, all forms of favorable legislation should be supported. But here again, one must not wait for Senators and Congressmen. Labor should actively promote legislation where it sees the necessity. "Just prior to our 10th Biennial Convention - with the backing of other state labor groups - we succeeded in obtaining legislation granting Social Security to 35,000 Civil Service Employees, one of TWU's aims." ⁹²

Here lies the connection with political activity especially in lobbying those candidates favorable to labor. The other side of the coin

⁹¹ TWU Convention Proceedings, 1965 Pg. 202

⁹² President's Report to 11th Constitutional Convention 1961, T. W. of A. 1961; Pg. 139

is labor's concerted effort to block, repeal, or amend those laws inimical to labor's welfare. Where those methods failed, Quill would ridicule the law, or perhaps flaunt it as in the case of the 1966 transit strike.

Quill's more immediate legislative goals were the repeal of the Condon-Wadlin Act, and the passing of a labor law, at least at a state level which would give public employees the right to strike. Peaceful pressure failed to achieve these ends, and it is the author's belief that during the 1966 transit strike, Quill foresaw that such a strike would put the Condon-Wadlin Act to the test, and that it would be found wanting. In many ways, the strike achieved the first of Quill's legislative aims. The new so-called Taylor Law, however, still retains the provision forbidding strikes by public employees.

Towards the end of his days, Quill expressed himself quite clearly on his over-all attitude towards labor legislation.

"Union leaders know that they and the unions they lead have historically and normally been the target of hostile legislation sponsored by reactionary groups of employers and their political fronts. As labor unions have developed into institutions of power and influence in our society, however, they have succeeded in persuading Congress and many state legislatures to enact federal and state legislation for their protection as organization, and more frequently and significantly for the benefit of both organized and unorganized working people." ⁹³

⁹³ President's Report to 12th Constitutional Convention 1965; Pg. 145

CHAPTER IV

QUILL'S VIEWS OF SIGNIFICANT AREAS AFFECTING THE LABOR MOVEMENT

1. ECONOMIC SYSTEMS

Once he had freed himself from Communism, there can be little doubt that Quill, particularly in his later years, firmly supported the system of free enterprise as it is found here in the United States. But this support was not unconditional. Unbridled free enterprise resulted in the misery of the working men as "barons of big business" - a favorite expression of Quill's - lined their pockets at the worker's expense. Labor's role in the capitalist system is one of dissent, one which will ensure a better and more equitable distribution of profits. Free enterprise means competition, and this means prosperity, but labor must see to it that the worker is not ground between the competitive wheels. While Quill does not appear to have used the expression "purchasing power" in this connection, it is the author's belief that he would subscribe to this economic theory as we shall see when dealing with automation.

But apart from the above modification of capitalism, there are strong Socialist trends in Quill's economic views. As has been mentioned, Quill was strongly influenced by James Connolly, the Irish Socialist trade leader. Another influence on Quill was Eugene V. Debs. "James Connolly and Eugene

V. Debs inspired the founding of TWU as an industrial union of transit workers" ** One of Quill's favorite books was "Debs, His Life, Writings, and Speeches", published in 1908 by the Appeal to Reason. This Socialist influence remained strong in Quill's thought, though not coupled with the violence and the overthrow of private property. In certain areas of the economy, he saw a mild form of Socialism to be necessary. This was particularly true of public utilities and services. Here Quill felt that the profit motive should be eliminated, and that the Government should take over.

"We believe that all transportation—both ground and air and all utilities should be owned and operated by the Federal Government. The profit motive must be taken out of these important services. Interest paid to bond holders and stockholders must be eliminated.

Today many of these industries are being subsidized by the Federal Government, or by City and State Agencies through the taxpayer's dollars. This is called Free Enterprise. When the Federal, State and City Governments are forced to take over direct ownership operation of these essential utilities and run them for the benefit of all citizens, it will be called Socialism.

If we are to avoid a complete breakdown of our mass transportation system; if we are to preserve these essential utilities, if technological advances are to continue, as they must; if the American economy is to be saved by putting the unemployed back to work; if job opportunities are to be provided for 1,400,000 new workers who present themselves each year at our nation's employment offices—then we must look to the socialization of these industries. Better that we plan for it in an orderly manner than have it forced upon us, as it has been forced, to a greater or lesser extent, upon most of the countries of Europe and throughout the world." **

** TWU Express, May 1964, Pg. 62

** President's Report to 11th Constitutional Convention, TWU 1961, Pg. 18-19

Throughout the conventions and reports of his later years, Quill became more and more confirmed in his view that nationalization was the only solution to the transportation problems of the United States.

An understanding of Quill's relations to American capitalism requires a review of his association and attitude towards Communism, a subject that still causes some speculation among students of labor history. In order to understand Quill's views, it will be necessary to revert for a moment to the history of the TWU. Back in 1934, when Quill was making his first efforts to establish a union, he looked around for help. It will be remembered that many of his co-workers were Irish, and many contacts were made in halls and bars where Irishmen were wont to gather. But there were other groups of Irishmen, and the Ancient Order of Hibernians was one. Quill sought help here, but when he discovered that a Mister Keegan was President of the AOH, he soon abandoned his efforts. Mr. Keegan was also President of the IRT with whose management Quill had had many battles. The Communists saw Quill's enthusiasm, and Quill saw their readiness to support him and so a marriage of convenience came about. To the best of the author's knowledge there is no written evidence that Quill actually carried a card, but sources close to him in the union hold that he was in fact a card carrier. But whether or not he did in fact carry a card, Quill's early views were at least nominally Leftist. To what extent these were his real views will be discussed later.

Quill's early associates influenced these views. John Santo, who approached Quill in 1935, was an organizer for the Communist Party. Austin

Hogan and Douglas McMahon were card carrying members. These were three of the first five members of the TWU. As the union began to grow, Communists infiltrated more and more, and in order to still the consciences of many of his Irish Catholic fellow workers, Quill had to distinguish between one's private and one's public beliefs.

An early resolution asking that Fascism, Nazism, and Communism be condemned was bitterly opposed. "I ask every honest worker to turn that resolution down to hell." ** When then accused, Quill responded, "Communists, Socialists, Democrats have all done a good job for labor. I am not going out and admit or deny anything to satisfy a few narrow minded critics." ** "We take pride in having built an organization where the Democrat, the Communist, the Socialist, and the Republican can live and work side by side in unity." ** There can be little doubt that Quill's orientation at this time appeared to be definitely Communistic. Most of his writing was pro-Russia, and anti-German and anti-British. Secret Communist meetings were held all over New York, and as their influence in the CIO grew, so too did their voice in politics. The American Labor Party of those days was the local political arm, and, as we have seen, Quill was one of its strongest candidates.

With the outbreak of World War II, Quill was still consulting the Communists. At this time, he "adapted their tactics, allowed them to get

** TWU Convention Proceedings, 1937, Pg. 518

** Ibid. Pg. 646

** TWU Convention Proceedings, 1945, Pg. 7

important posts in the union, often followed their advice and voted several years with the Communist bloc in CIO councils and conventions." ** But by 1948, Quill's attitude had changed, and for local and international reasons, he was ready to break with the Communists. The local reason was provided by a possible fare increase on the subways. The Communists did not want it and wished to use the issue as a vote getting process with the subway riders. Quill, on the other hand, pushed for a higher fare in order to meet the wage increase he sought for his members, and with the help of good backdoor politics in City Hall, the break was made. Immediately, Quill let his fellow unionists know where he stood. In September 1947, Santo was threatened with deportation fro his Communist activities. Quill then led the John Santo Defense Committee. On September 20 of that year, Quill wrote:

"The 100,000 members of the Transport Workers Union throughout the country will rally to the defense of their leader and brother John Santo. For 13 years, they have watched Santo's record of complete devotion to American labor, and transit workers in particular." '00

By September 24, 1948, Santo was "one of the well-paid page boys of the left-clique." '01

On the international scene, Russia's post-war activity also disillusioned Quill, who admitted the expertise of Communist tactics in his union.

"At that time [1940], I must say in all fairness, that their medicine men were so numerous and so glib around TWU, that I too fell for their hecus-pocus. Since then

** Turcott and Kheel, op.cit., Pg. 29

'00 Transport Voice, September 20, 1947

'01 Transport Voice, September 24, 1948

I have learned something of the sufferings and misery endured by the peoples of the world after 1939, and—I have learned to do my own thinking and stand on my own feet." 102

Quill's chief objection to Communism and its relation to the labor movement lay in the fact that for him Communists were not really trade unionists. At a meeting of the International Executive Board of the TWU in 1948, Quill declared that "in these days of discussion [with the Communists] not one word was mentioned about organizing the unorganized, negotiating new contracts, solving the grievances of the workers, maintaining a united front against the employers in both ground and air transportation. The answer is simple. Not one of these lackeys could report truthfully that he had organized a dozen workers since the last TWU convention two years ago." 103

Quill's break was absolute. He had received all sorts of help from the Communists, organizing support, publicity, expert pamphleteering, financial aid and the like. But when the interests of the Party, and the interests of the union clashed, there was no doubt in Quill's mind which came first. His condemnation of Communism was directly chiefly at the leadership of the Communist unions, and not at the rank and file. Before his own open break with the Communists in his own union, a break finalized in the Chicago Convention of TWU in 1948, Quill entreated McMahon and others to leave the party, and there is little doubt that Quill reluctantly

102 Transport Voice, October 20, 1948

103 Ibid. September 24, 1948

expelled some of his early associates. Years later looking back on the step he had to take, Quill wrote in an editorial:

"I was not happy to engage in civil war in our union, nor was I happy at the thought of parting with people with whom I had worked for more than 14 years—But their political beliefs crossed swords with the best interests of your union after World War II came to a close. I pleaded with these men a dozen times or more to continue their work as trade unionists and to keep their political theories and programs out of the unions.

I made these pleas solely in the interest of our organization. It takes years of sweat and tears to build an organization, and I knew it could be torn apart and destroyed in a few weeks. It takes years to train competent leadership leaders don't grow on trees. My pleas were in vain. When it became evident that their political program finally would ruin TWU, then in the best interest of all, the present leadership of the International and local unions, we were compelled to cut out this cancer from our midst." 104

This quotation indicates a development in Quill's views on Communism. In the early days his own apparent political beliefs did not cross swords with the best interests of the union. It paid to be Left. In many ways these interests went hand in hand with the interests of the Communist party. Both wanted to build a union. But the motivation was altogether different. The Communists wanted to use the union in the hopes of getting control over a key sector of New York City. Quill on the other hand, wanted to build a good union for his men, to improve their lot, and fulfill the objectives mentioned earlier in this study: better wages and working conditions.

104 TWU Express, April 1954

2. LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

As has been mentioned, the 1954 Factfinding Committee's Report to Mayor Wagner indicated that in the transit industry in New York labor relations were disastrous. The Transit Authority came in for much criticism because of its "disposition to regard everything from a cold and legalistic standpoint, to throw every roadblock in the way of informal and harmonious dealings with union officials, and to perpetuate widely varying practices through unification." ¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, the union was criticized for its "constant propaganda against the Authority, by job practices which cost unnecessary billions of dollars a year, and by a tendency to stymie any attempt by management to make possible economies." ¹⁰⁶

This labor relations situation in some way reflects Quill's philosophy on labor-management relations. There can be no doubt that there was much personal ill-feeling between union leaders and the transit employers. Hence, Quill's view was that only total war could achieve the union aims. He was certainly a believer in the conflict theory of industrial relations and he employed every possible tactic in this war: slow-downs, stoppages, strike threats, and in many cases, the strike itself. Quill's view would be that circumstances forced him to act as he did, and working on the principle that bad bosses make good unions, Quill vilified and derided management. The intransigence of these employers left Quill with a militant

¹⁰⁵ Fact-Finding Committee, 1954, Pg. 9

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

and rather unruly rank and file. Here again, Quill realized that good-labor-management relations can only be possible if the union leader had real control over his members. Both John L. Lewis and Philip Murray persuaded Mayors La Guardia and O'Dwyer that:

"Quill was not the rascal and knave the anti-TWU elements in industry and press would make him out to be. His innumerable strike threats and occasional slow-downs---were due to his basic trade union philosophy that a strong labor leader must exercise control at all times over all sections of his union." 107

Quill believed that good labor-management relations were characterized by intelligent management, and strong trade union leadership. When you had this then you could have good hard and fair collective bargaining with labor exercising its right to dissent and pushing its demands for more. One further element needed in the New York situation is that both parties have a good relationship with City Hall. This was necessary in view of the Mayor's constant intervention in the settlement of labor disputes. Unless, therefore, matters get completely out of hand, Quill believed that controlled militancy in the rank and file is a necessary prerequisite to sound labor relations. Co-operation, or any species of accommodation must be avoided. In view of the nature of the transit industry, one in which labor costs are extremely high, some co-operation to cut these costs should have been possible. But not for Quill. For him this was the beginning of respectability, the ultimate danger to the labor movement and hence to good labor-management relations.

107 Turcott and Kheel, op.cit., Pg. 35

"Some of our people are experiencing for the first time the giddiness which is a symbol of phoney prosperity. The tinsel is blinding them. They are riding in shiny new automobiles, and enjoying television sets which are owned 70 per cent by the installment and credit dealers. Too many workers are satisfied to go along with the tide—they pay their dues, but never attend a union meeting. The desire to fight, to struggle, to sacrifice, to walk the picket line, seems to have been abandoned by a dangerously large cross section of the organized workers. The balloon of false prosperity is going to burst. If the labor movement is weakened through indifference, workers will lose more than their installment purchased cars and T.V. sets." 108

Control over the rank and file also implied the suppression of splinter groups within the union. Quill had always been plagued by the Motormen's efforts for separate recognition and their 9-day wildcat subway strike in 1957 brought the question of splinter groups to a head. In this situation, Quill was forced to make some special conditions for the motormen and to cooperate in the removal of certain work abuses by his members. Here Quill saw a tie-in between industrial unionism and good labor-management relations. Dissent in the membership weakens the leadership and so weakens the relationship with management. On the other hand, "the strongest possible collective bargaining weapon is the solid support of the men and women who are, in every sense the Union itself." 109

Another important aspect of labor-management relations which for Quill was of great importance was the settling of labor disputes. While compulsory arbitration over contract terms was anathema to Quill, he approved

108 TWU Express, April 1952

109 President's Report to 12th Constitutional Convention, 1965; TWU, Pg. 27

of impartial compulsory arbitration to settle grievances. In having Theodore Kheel as umpire in New York, Quill was happy, but it is difficult to determine whether or not Quill would have been so pro-arbitration had he not had Kheel.

"The TWU has always urged arbitration to settle disputes, and we practice what we preach. Theodore W. Kheel has now completed ten years as arbitrator of New York transit. Innumerable times our union has appeared before him on disputes that might otherwise have led to strikes or slowdowns. We actually won fewer cases than we lost. But whether we won or lost, we knew we had a fair shake, and we complied with every award he handed down."¹¹

3. TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

At first sight it might not appear that transportation is an industry that would lend itself to automation. But this is not so. Electrically controlled trains, radar controlled navigation and other changes have provided a challenge for the TWU and for Quill. In his views on this matter, Quill does not deviate substantially from the line taken by other labor leaders. Perhaps he expressed himself more often and more violently than others but his ideas do not differ from theirs. Quill's frequent soundings off on automation may be accounted for by the fact that it hit various sections of his union at various times, from the removal of the old trolley car and his conductors, to the possibility of the displacement of the subway motorman if the robot train were to succeed.

For Quill technological change could never be introduced unilaterally. In a normal labor-management relationship, this would not be tolerated.

¹¹ Turcott and Kheel, op.cit., Pg. 60 quoting Quill [source not given]

In the hostile situation which existed in New York with the subways, and in Pennsylvania with the railroads, it would be impossible.

"The TWU wishes to make it clear that we welcome technological improvements as long as they are shared equally by the employees, the consumer, and management. I also wish to make it clear, that in the past, our union has not allowed such improvements to become the instrumentality for depriving workers of their jobs or their hard-earned security....In TWU's definition an "improvement" means the greatest good for the greatest number." ""

Quill demanded that the union be consulted prior to any important technological innovation be introduced. Then it was possible to discuss the consequences, the lay-offs, severance pay and the like.

In order to ensure the proper working of this type of discussion, Quill outlined a definite system to be used when the question of technological change came up.

"With technological advances occurring every day, working conditions must be improved to keep pace with these changes.

I recommend to the delegates to this convention and to the incoming International Executive Council and Board that COMMITTEES ON AUTOMATION be established throughout the country in every company and line where we now have contracts or where new contracts are to be negotiated.

We call upon the many companies or governmental agencies scheduled to meet with us across the collective bargaining table to prepare for JOINT Union-Management committees on automation. There can be no further unilateral action by management with respect to this problem.

The function of such joint committees will be to study each and every proposed change in equipment which threatens to abolish jobs or displace the existing work force through attrition. It will be the responsibility of these committees to bring these problems to the attention of the local membership for discussion and decision. Where workers are not trained to handle new automated machines, it will be the responsibility of these committees to make preparations for re-training these workers at management's expense, if management wishes to automate its property. Wherever these committees cannot agree on the proposed procedures, there must be provisions made for a competent IMPARTIAL CHAIRMAN to make final and binding decisions on each problem that has become deadlocked." ¹¹²

For Quill, the introduction of automation meant greater savings, greater productivity for the employer. These savings were likewise to be shared with the employee.

"As automation and productivity—advance increases, the savings must be shared with the worker in the form of increased leisure, regardless of the immediate employment picture. And where productivity advance is accomplished by technological displacement, the union will insist on a shorter work week, without reduction in pay, as a means of stabilizing employment." ¹¹³

The solution in the long run to the entire problem of automation lay for Quill, as for most other labor leaders, in the shorter work week with no loss of take home pay. This would satisfy the worker and help towards the goal of full employment.

"The only effective answer to automation is the shorter work week, which also creates jobs for the unemployed and maintains the purchasing power of those who are employed. President Johnson

¹¹² Presidential Report to 11th Constitutional Convention, [TWU] 1961
Pg. 182

¹¹³ President's Report 10th Biennial Convention, T.W.U., 1959, Pg. 67

has said, "In the Great Society, all men must have the self respect, and the economic security that flow from full use of their talents." We could not agree more. Nothing less than full employment can be America's number one goal. But to achieve it, America must meet and defeat the challenge of unbridled automation which, according to no less an expert than John I. Synder, is "eliminating jobs in the United States at the rate of more than 40,000 a week...."

To protect our members against massive job losses through unbridled automation, we have insisted upon job security in all industries where we hold contracts--in the utilities field where automated equipment is multiplying almost daily--on the railroads where the problem is complicated by the threats of mergers, such as the proposed Pennsylvania-New York Central--on the airlines where the development of the jets and new navigational devices have added to the dangers of job losses--and in city passenger transportation where, among other innovations, robot train operation has been introduced."¹¹⁴

Quill's views on job security and the shorter work week affected his contract demands at the bargaining table. In 1961, he sought a 4-day, 32 hour week for all ground transportation workers, and a 30-hour week for airline workers. In his 1965 contract demands with the Transit Authority, he had advanced to a 30-hour week for the subway and bus workers. To support these demands, Quill used the argument that even as people thought it was crazy that a 40-week could have been won, so they think a 35 or 30-hour week is impossible. But TWU achieved one, why not, in time, the other. His voice, like that of other labor leaders is raised in favor of the shorter work week only when particular circumstances demand it, as for instance, the unemployment in the post-Korean War period, or with the

¹¹⁴ President's Report 12th Constitutional Convention, T.W.U. 1965,
Pg. 14-15

advent of new technological improvements. In Quill's view, we can see the traditional shift from the plea for shorter hours because the normal hours are too long to a plea for shorter hours to combat unemployment.

"It is obvious, however, that today's labor leaders are not reiterating the nineteenth-century plea that employees are overworked. They are concentrating almost exclusively on the argument that if some men work long hours, while others are deprived of work, shorter hours will enable more men to have jobs."¹¹⁸

This describes well Quill's approach to automation.

4. CIVIL RIGHTS

As has been mentioned in this study, Quill was an advocate of Civil Rights from the very beginning of his trade union activity. He fought bitterly for equal job opportunities and opposed all forms of racism and discrimination. Article II [a] of the Constitution of the TWU states that:

"The object of this organization shall be:
To unite in this industrial union, regardless of
race, and creed; color or nationality, all workers
eligible for membership."¹¹⁹

Both in New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans, Quill put his beliefs into practice despite much opposition. Many financial contributions were made to Civil Rights leaders. Quill exhorted many of his leading officers to engage in Civil Rights activities, in marches like the one to Selma, in rallies and demonstrations. Pamphlets were issued by the union outlining

¹¹⁸ Marcia L. Greenbaum, The Shorter Workweek [Ithaca: New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Cornell University, 1963] Bulletin 50, Pg. 11

¹¹⁹ Constitution of the Transport Workers Union of America, Art. II [a]

the policy and attitude of the TWU and Quill himself spoke frequently on the issue. In this respect, TWU had certain firsts--their most notable being in New Orleans in 1939 where Local 205 in defiance of the City's ordinance barring Negro and white members from meeting together had the first desegregated trade union meeting held there since the post Civil War Reconstruction Period.

In Philadelphia in 1944 when Quill attempted to put into effect his first bargaining contract with the Philadelphia Transportation Company, he demanded "the upgrading of Negro porters to mechanics, to streetcar operators, to all other positions for which our Negro membership should qualify." "' Management's refusal resulted in a strike which was finally settled only by the introduction of State Troopers and the agreement to the TWU demands.

Within the administration of the union, Quill continued to practice what he preached. There is a Negro on the Executive Council and two on the Executive Board of the International.

Quill firmly believed that Civil Rights legislation was needed, and that then every effort should be made to enforce this legislation.. He summed up his union position as follows:

"The struggle for equal rights began, of course, long before TWU was born, and entered into the lists in its behalf. But from the first day of its existence in 1936, the fight for equal rights has been TWU's fight too--wherever discrimination was found.....

Our job is ending segregation in our time. We dare not leave it to our successors....Nothing must be left undone that could influence Congress in passing the Civil Rights Law in 1964." ¹¹⁸

Quill, of course, realized that the battle had to be won within his own union, and in a pamphlet in 1963, he exhorted his members to back Civil Rights.

"To whatever minority group there may be in TWU, which still resists all of the moral and legal reasons for equal Civil Rights for all Americans—including Negroes—we must say that the time for hiding from the facts of life has run out. No longer can heads be buried in the sand, and the Twentieth Century be allowed to pass them by. Whether it is liked or not, there will be equal rights for all Americans in our day." ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ TWU Express, May 1964, Pg. 48-49

¹¹⁹ TWU and the Fight for Civil Rights issued by Transport Workers Union of America 1963, Pg. 31-32

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION - CRITICAL REVIEW OF

QUILL'S LABOR PHILOSOPHY

In this final section of the study, the author will endeavor to present in review form the main threads of Quill's labor philosophy and to hold these up for inspection before standing back and looking at the entire pattern. In the course of the study, particular emphasis was laid on those aspects of Quill's views which differed from those of other labor leaders. Many topics were not touched on, pensions, severance pay, retraining and the like, not because Quill did not have plenty to say about them, but rather because what he said was not sufficiently distinctive to merit prolonged mention.

Again in this study, much emphasis was laid on the situation existing in New York City, because this was the bloody ground arena where Quill first practised the art of industrial warfare. Furthermore, it was in the birth and development of Local 100 that Quill's views on labor slowly crystallized. True, he had other groups with other interests, but one can say that Local 100 and its activities dominated the union, partly because of sheer size alone, and partly because of its strong economic power in New York City.

One further clarification is needed before beginning this review and

that is the sense in which one uses the word philosophy particularly in relation to the study. We are not talking here about a philosophy of labor, as being a set of views based on some fundamental coherent system of thought. Like most of the other labor leaders in this country, Quill does not have a philosophy of labor in that sense. There is no basic primary ideology which motivates his trade unionism. Apart from certain pragmatic Socialist trends, Quill's European influences were off somewhat as was the case with Dubinsky and others. True, Connolly's influence remained strong on Quill all through Quill's life in labor. It was, however, the conclusions of Connolly's Socialism--industrial unionism--which impressed Quill, not the more philosophical reasoning from whence this industrial unionism came. Philosophy, therefore, will be taken to mean the aggregate of mature opinions expressed by Quill on those vital areas and objectives of the labor movement in general, and of the TWU in particular. This gradually evolving, opportunistic, and pragmatic type of trade union activity characterized Quill's views, and only in his concept of a National Labor Party do we see a return to a more European type of "philosophical philosophy."

It has been a common practice among labor writers to classify unionism in the categories of business unionism and uplift unionism. It is perhaps difficult to brand Quill's philosophy as one or the other; firstly, because the categories are not mutually exclusive, and secondly, because Quill could be almost as well placed in one as in the other. If, however, one had to come down on one side rather than the other, the writer's preference

would be for uplift unionism. What concerned Quill chiefly was the overall dignity of the worker, and based on that dignity the workers right to a good decent-standard of living. There can be little doubt that Quill had a real feeling for his members and this is expressed time and again in his writing.

"Now that the transit job is becoming fit for human beings, the old timers---will not be with us long enough to enjoy the new age in New York Transit. Many of the old timers helped to build our union, and they deserve everything good we can get for them in their remaining years. We are sorry that TWU wasn't started 60 years ago instead of 16 years ago, but there is little we can do about it. Historically, it could not have been otherwise." ¹²

This quote sums up the basic attitude that Quill has as a leader of his men. "I can only be as good a representative as you make me", he would tell his men, and having won their confidence, he worked hard to justify it. Of course, all these humanistic ideals had to be put into practice both in his own union and throughout the world. We shall, therefore, examine critically some of the salient points of this study.

For Quill the American Labor Movement had always to be alive and vital. This vitality was shot into it with the birth of the CIO, and was sadly lessened by the merger in 1955. In hindsight there can be little doubt about Quill's foresight then. Much has since been said and written about the apparent stagnation in labor, the failure to organize the unorganized, the lack of advance in the white-collar field and so on. For Quill, this situation resulted from the merger, and had CIO been allowed

¹² TWU Express, June 1950

to continue along the course chartered by Murray and Hillman, the situation would be very different now. Much of Quill's dissatisfaction was on a personal basis as he did not approve of Reuther's method in pushing the merger, and he saw Meeney as sadly lacking in the qualities needed to make the merger a success. The recent runblings which appear to indicate Reuther's desire to withdraw from the AFL-CIO indicate Quill's political acumen in relation to the merger.

This political foresight of Quill's was manifested on other occasions also, and indicates that in some respects he was a man before his time. His awareness of the growing power of mass communications media was acute. He foresaw the need for a labor television station and again his suggestion was not followed until it was too late. We now have a labor-owned radio stations, but as yet, to the best of the author's knowledge, no television station. Again back in 1946, Quill was advocating free medical attention and free education as aims towards which American labor should be striving. It was to be many years before Medicare finally came to pass. Here too one might include Quill's realization that in fact Communism would never work in this country.

Regarding Quill's personal association with the Communist Party, a question arises for which it is difficult to find an answer. Did Quill really believe in the ideology of Communism, the abolition of private property, the underlying Marxist philosophy, and did this view change? Or, on the other hand, did Quill go along with the ideas, did he indulge in nominal Communism in order to build up his union? There can be little

doubt that he used them and quite possibly allowed them to believe that they were using him. It is the author's belief that Quill in his early days approved of certain aspects of Communism, in particular its attack on the mal-distribution of wealth, and the exploitation of the worker. Quill would have wholeheartedly subscribed to the slogan "Workers of the World, Unite", but not to the full extent demanded by totalitarian Communism. This may appear equivocal, but in fact it merely emphasizes the reality that men's views change. Quill's views were not static and when he fully understood where Communism was leading he rejected it. Quill's pragmatic non-philosophical approach to trade unionism led to his realization that a Communist ideology would never really succeed in the American Labor Movement. So despite his early expression of loyalty, and at times, his public defense of the Communist line, it still appears true that Quill's interest in Communism was purely utilitarian. The author discussed this with Quill and the general reply was: "I needed them. I had to get help somewhere, and you won't get much help if you begin by disagreeing with their principles. America is not sufficiently class conscious to allow for the development of a strong Communist Party. But in the early days, they didn't realize this."

However, Quill was a man of inconsistencies. There can be little doubt about his belief that the solution to labor's political problems lay in the formation of a third party, the National Labor Party. But the construction of such a party would in some way demand a social structure similar to that of Europe. For a labor party as Quill envisaged it, a

strong class-consciousness is almost a prerequisite, and in the history of the development of labor movement in America, such class distinction has not existed. Reuther saw Quill's belief in a third party as "essentially the product of frustration, and not of carefully thinking through the problem." ¹²¹

This may be true, but then it must be remembered that Reuther was loud in his support of the merger. In general, it may be remarked that the history of American labor and the views of its leaders would lead on to the conclusion that a third party as envisaged by Quill would be somewhat unlikely, and that the view of reward your friends and punish your enemies will more than likely prevail.

Reuther's comment that Quill had not carefully thought through the problem would apply more to Quill's views on the nationalization of the transportation system of the United States. It is surprising that a man of Quill's experience of European labor problems could fail to see that socialization sometimes creates more problems than it solves. Government-operated railroads in England, for example, have run into as much, if not more, labor-relations problems that one finds with the railroads here, and the removal of the profit motive is not the final solution it would appear to be. In addition, nationalization of any large industry leaves the government open to the possibility of a national strike. In this respect, therefore, it is difficult to estimate how serious Quill was in his proposals. It is the author's belief that there is some discrepancy here

¹²¹ CIO Convention Proceedings, 1955, Pg. 488

between what Quill said, and what Quill really meant.

There can be little doubt about Quill's honest belief in the process of collective bargaining. He resented the type of government intervention which would remove the responsibility from the parties and settle the issues of compulsory arbitration. Unfortunately, because of his personality, people would more easily recall or advert to Quill's tactics in bargaining than to the issues involved. In the early part of this work Turoott was quoted as saying that Quill "doesn't care if he fights fairly or not". This comment is valid in so far as it refers to Quill's antics at the table, his biting humor, and his tendency to make personal and insulting remarks about his opponents. But in the actual matter of negotiations, Quill was fair. It was the antics however which caught the limelight. In this respect, he was a natural target for the newspapers, in particular for The New York Times, for whom he had a happy hatred. Here we touch on something referred to in the introduction, but of key importance in trying to understand Quill - the close relationship between his labor philosophy and his personality. There can be little doubt that Quill was the showman par excellence, the Phineas T. Barnum of American labor. This was both a strength and a weakness. For those who supported him it helped, but it obscured the real nature of his work for those who opposed him. An example is found in the demands which Quill put forth every two years to the Transit Authority. Here Quill had a reasonably legitimate point to make. A mechanic working for any branch of the City other than transit makes 5.35 an hour; a mechanic working on the subway cars makes 4.0075

Quill's aim in his negotiation was to equalize these rates, to have his men paid what the City men were being paid. But these demands were so presented that Quill alienated much of the public, and generally gave the impression that public convenience mattered little until his men got their just desserts.

At this point one may legitimately ask why such a differential still existed. Would this not raise the question as to the effectiveness of Quill's previous efforts at the bargaining table. An editorial from The New York Times puts the problem well:

"By citing in these negotiations the unfavorable spread between some categories of transit wages, and wages for similar work in other city departments, Mr. Quill merely indicts his own record as a union leader."¹²²

The answer to this lies in Quill's collective bargaining tactics. Up to 1963, Quill's basis of bargaining had been the wages of transit workers in New York compared to those of transit workers in other major cities in the States. For many years, the New York transit rates were lower than those in other cities. Quill closed this gap and by 1963 transit workers in New York were paid the highest rates in the country. In order to make further advances Quill had to devise a new standard, take up a new position at the bargaining table. The new standard became the prevailing rate paid by the city to certain classifications whose work was similar to that of the transit worker. Quill of course concentrated exclusively on the wage differential, ignoring, for bargaining purposes, the many fringe benefits his own men had, and which the other contracts often lacked. An example would be an employee who worked for the New Jersey tubes. These tubes are

¹²² New York Times, January 5th, 1966, Pg. 30. Editorial

controlled by the Port of Authority Trans-Hudson, a wealthy Authority, with little enough labor cost, and whose wages policy is to pay the prevailing rate laid down by the Controller of the City of New York, with no collective bargaining involved. Quill could compare this wage packet to that paid by the Transit Authority, note the differential, ignore other issues like the fact that the Trans-Hudson was solvent and the Transit Authority was not.

Like other labor leaders, Quill's activity at the bargaining table was, of course, a reflection of the attitudes and thinking of his membership. The history of these attitudes explain to some extent Quill's exaggerated braggadocio both in public appearances and at the bargaining table. In the days of the craft unions in transport, each union had to prove itself to its members by going one better than the next, by being more militant and more demanding than the next. If the Signalmen had obtained a ten cent raise, then the Towermen would have to go for more. A union, therefore, which was going to surpass them all, needed an even stronger emphasis on militancy, and a leader who could confuse or belittle the bosses. Quill and the TWU filled the bill. Once the union had been established on this basis, it had to remain so. Consequently, many of Quill's later remarks while sounding like quotes from another era, were in fact but a continuation of the mentality in which the union was founded. Even with Quill's death, there could be no backing down on this theme for the TWU, Quill was a hard but fair bargainer. His initial demands did in fact contain many outlandish requests but these were more often than not bargaining give-aways, and were recognized as such by management.

One of his important tactical weapons was the strike threat, and at times the strike itself. Here one finds that Quill's sense of dedication to his men outweighed his consideration for the public. Quill was not strike happy. Many of his threats were necessary if he was to maintain control in his union. For someone who worked up from the bottom the hard way, this control would not be relinquished too easily. Labor union leaders in general are well aware of the precarious nature of their own positions. Much politicking with members is necessary to maintain it. At times, this politicking appears to have been carried on at the expense of the public interest. But it would be false to assume that Quill had no regard for the public interest. It is the author's conviction that Quill did not want the 1966 subway strike in New York. Quill's comment before the strike was: "There is enough stupidity going around that I'm afraid it will spill over into a strike, but we don't want one." When questioned by the author on the economic set-back that the smaller businessmen would suffer, the inconvenience to the ordinary worker, Quill's reply was that his men were ordinary workers too, and that when a union leader is under pressure from his local, and the demands are not unreasonable, then if a strike is necessary, strike he must.

On one thing Quill was sure. Such conflicts in industrial relations can be solved only if the situation is left to the parties themselves. Government intervention through legislation is only going to remove the ultimate responsibility of the parties. This was part of the price to be paid for collective bargaining. A law, therefore, which removed the right to strike hit at the very heart of collective bargaining, and would in

fact create more strikes than the bargaining process itself. Quill, however, carried this reasoning to an unwarranted conclusion. If the law was a "bad" law, then one's only course of action was to defy it. Here one must take issue with Quill's philosophy on government intervention and the function of labor legislation. The Condon-Wadlin Act specifically forbade public employees to strike and the new Taylor Law has upheld that provision. If an individual can take it upon himself to defy that law, especially at the cost of so much public inconvenience, then the law becomes subject to the man. In his Civil Rights pamphlet, Quill quotes the late John F. Kennedy, "Americans are free to disagree with the law but not to disobey it. For in a government of laws and not of men, no man, however prominent and powerful, and no mob, however unruly or boisterous is entitled to defy a court of law."¹²³ These words apply as much to trade unions leaders as they do to other men. Early in 1966, Governor Rockefeller set up a Public Employee Relation Committee to inquire into the effectiveness of the Condon-Wadlin Act. This committee composed of George W. Taylor, David L. Cole, John T. Dunlop, Frederick H. Harbison, and E. Wright Bakke, stated that "economic coercion involving work stoppages is not to be applied in our society against government. The proper course for the employee organization to take—is the legislative and political arena representing all the people."¹²⁴ Quill could have made his case known more effectively to the public, but the instinct for the dramatic coupled

¹²³ TWU and Civil Rights, 1934-1965, issued by Transport Workers Union of American, AFL-CIO. Pg. 20

¹²⁴ State of New York: Governor's Committee on Public Employees Relations Final Report, March 31, 1966, mimeographed. Pg. 56-57

with pressure from the Local resulted in his defiance of the law. It is the author's belief that Quill did not fully realize the differences existing between the public and private sector with regard to collective negotiation and strikes.

We have seen how Quill saw the shorter work-week as labor's answer to the problem of automation. It is the author's belief supported by some union officials that this in fact was window dressing for Quill. The four-day, 33-hour week is put forward as an issue to be bargained away "reluctantly" in lieu of some other gain. There were comparatively few layoffs which would merit serious bargaining over the 33-hour week. From interviews with workers on the subways, one can see that in fact many of them do not want the shorter work week. Quill realized this. One could, therefore, conclude that Quill's demand for a shorter work week need not be taken as seriously as it might sound.

While the scope of Quill's labor ideals and philosophy is broad, he himself is no great economic planner, no great organization man. In fact, some of Quill's impact on the labor world tended to lessen after the fifties. The close association with the Communists in the forties, the opposition to the merger in the fifties in some way curtailed what might have been a wider scope of influence. While the author has little evidence to support the following premise, except some interviews both with union officials and members of the Transit Authority, he has the impression that in his early years, Quill had ambitions of forming one-all-embracing transport union covering ground, air, and subway transportation. The

entrenched railroad unions, he would leave alone, but all the airlines, the bus companies in the major cities, if all of these could be united into one big industrial union, then a life's work would be accomplished. Perhaps the fact that this did not materialize may have been an additional reason for the sound and fury of his labor relations in New York. Had CIO continued along its earlier lines, Quill's voice in American labor would perhaps have been stronger.

There can be no question of Quill's dedication to his job in the world of labor. His close affiliation with his members springs from a markedly Irish trait; namely, the strong tendency to seek close identification with one's local group. This is particularly true in the small villages and towns. Quill was totally identified with TWU. Not that this lessened his awareness of the broader problems in labor—but it was in the old CIO and in his own union especially that he really came to life. There was never any question about the complete honesty of his leadership and it is a pity that, at times, his external foibles tended to obliterate the extent of the work he was doing. "I think that your leadership and particularly Mike, are too inclined to conceal the really responsible character of their contribution to the affairs of this great city in particular." 122

Thus did Goldberg sum up the work of the TWU, and at a memorial meeting in Manhattan Center to commemorate Quill's death, Goldberg in some way summed up Quill's philosophy. "He loved his Union, worked Union,

played Union. He is an essential part of America's labor heritage of honest leadership." 120

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